

# THE ARGOSY

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## "OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE"<sup>1</sup>

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### CHAPTER I

**I**T is a very fine day."

Helen Thorneycroft looked up from the pile of invitation cards she was filling in from the list of names in front of her, a smile quivering for an instant across her mouth. It was a pretty mouth, well curved though resolutely closed, with a humorous little dimple coming and going at the corners that betrayed an inclination, both courageous and cheering in these days of pessimism, to take life gaily. Life is a serious affair to most people. That irrepressible inclination of hers to see an amusing side to things, in the opinion of a good many of her friends, deserved repression—and got it. She was grave enough now as she answered the brilliant remark just addressed to her.

"It is a very fine day."

The stout gentleman, standing half in and half out of the window, fidgeted and passed his plump hands one over the other after a fashion that suggested some embarrassment. He glanced at her once or twice and looked quickly away again, though what he saw certainly could not have displeased him, and his eyes were kindly and just a little anxious. By-and-by he spoke again.

"It—it was a fine day yesterday, wasn't it?"

Certainly it had been, and the day before that, and the day before that. There had been quite an abnormal run of fine days, and to judge by appearances, they were likely to continue for some time. The smile about Miss Thorneycroft's pretty lips dared to be a little more pronounced. The conversation along these lines might be indefinitely prolonged. Still, when we do get a little fine weather, it is as well we should acknowledge it, and she was conscious of the fact that she was distinctly grateful there should be any conversation at

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all. That same gratitude spoke very plainly in her eyes as she lifted them to meet the little gentleman's half-apprehensive look. Hazel eyes they were, heavily and darkly fringed top and bottom, with a smile lurking in their depths of liquid light, for which the circumstances of Miss Thorneycroft's life had hitherto furnished very insufficient excuse.

"The barometer is falling, Mr. MacArthur."

"Is it? Is it now?" hurriedly seizing both the information and the opportunity of speaking again. "You wouldn't think it, to look out there, would you?" with a lingering glance over the glowing beds and sun-baked lawn outside. "Perhaps it's only a thunderstorm. Does the barometer fall when it's going to thunder? I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps it rises! Do you think it rises? You are busy, aren't you, my——? See you at dinner, shan't I? Good-bye till dinner then!" and the little gentleman put his hands under his coat-tails and hustled briskly away.

"Good-bye, good-bye, *good-bye!*!" cried a green parrot in the corner with unnecessary emphasis. Miss Thorneycroft laughed outright as she heard it.

"Dear, kind little man," she said as she drew another pile of cards, with an aggressive crest at the top and two small tennis-rackets crossed at the bottom, under her white fingers and set to work again.

A shadow fell into the room, blotting out the patch of sunlight which lay, still and golden, on the polished floor. Miss Thorneycroft's lips hardened before its owner followed it. Had there been a barometer sensitive to the mental atmosphere of a house, that would certainly have been found to be falling too.

"Have you—er—finished those cards?"

"Not quite."

"How many have you written?"

"Half of them. Perhaps a few more."

"Mr. MacArthur has been here, talking to you, wasting your time?"

"Mr. MacArthur was certainly here talking to me a moment ago, but he has not wasted my time."

"Will you—er—kindly tell me what he had to say to you?"

"He said it was a very fine day," replied Miss Thorneycroft demurely.

A thrill, a quiver, a positive ripple of indignant astonishment passed over the ample proportions of the woman, big, blonde, and heavy, standing opposite.

"Miss Thorneycroft," she said icily, "are you pleased to be deliberately impudent?"

Miss Thorneycroft put her elbow on the writing-table before her, and her chin on her hand, and looked up at her antagonist. A little flash had, for the moment, banished the smile whose home was in her eyes.

"I am simply stating a fact," she said quietly. "That is what

Mr. MacArthur said. As for being impertinent, I did not know I could."

Mrs. MacArthur's next breath came a little short. What might that mean? But in more than one encounter of wits and words lately, Mrs. MacArthur was uneasily conscious that she had come off second best; that, handicapped as she was by a heavily moving brain and a hitherto unsuspected dearth of language, Miss Thorneycroft had had the audacity to prove more than a match for her. And that was not Miss Thorneycroft's only audacity. She was better born, better bred, better educated and better looking than her employer, on each of which several and individual counts Mrs. MacArthur severally and individually hated her with an entire hatred. Mr. MacArthur did not, which fact had been cap and finial, ball and weathercock, to the rapidly reared edifice of Miss Thorneycroft's crimes. Discretion is the better part of valour, and Mrs. MacArthur remembered it. Proverbs have their uses sometimes, giving us authority and precedent for conduct we might be a little ashamed of without their unsuspected mental support, and, bolstered up by that one, Mrs. MacArthur removed her large, fair, languid presence with what dignity was left her. Miss Thorneycroft brushed away a curling tendril of bronze hair that strayed across her forehead as though she would brush away some nameless irritation with it, and then she laughed a little—so many things are bearable if we can only learn to laugh at them. A letter, too, lay on the table in the hall, sealed, stamped, locked in the letter-bag and past recall, a letter that caused her a thrill of satisfaction every time she remembered it.

"DEAREST NAN,—I have tried my experiment, thank Philip for letting me. It is an unmitigated failure, as he always assured me it would be. Tell him so; it will afford him infinite satisfaction. I give a month's warning to-morrow before twelve, and come home again like a bad shilling in September.—Your loving NELL."

Had some undeveloped sixth sense enabled Mrs. MacArthur to do what in justice to her it must be acknowledged she had ardently desired, acquaint herself with the contents of Miss Thorneycroft's letter without breaking the seal, Miss Thorneycroft's life had undoubtedly been different, and this story had never been written. But though Mrs. MacArthur could do many things, this, unfortunately for Miss Thorneycroft, was beyond her. When a woman is jealous, with or without cause, she will do much; when she is malicious as well as jealous, she will do more; when, in addition to these two amiable qualities, she is utterly unscrupulous as to the means she uses to appease her jealousy and gratify her malice, she will do anything. Mrs. MacArthur trailed her silken skirts lazily upstairs, an idea that had lain in embryo some little time in what mind she had springing to life adolescent, armed at all points, dominant, compelling, like Minerva from the brain of Jove.

"I'll do it to-night," she told herself, with a gasp at the iniquity of her own intentions.

Meanwhile, Miss Thorneycroft's work was doomed to yet another interruption. Another little gentleman stepped in through the open window—a little gentleman whose deficiencies in the matter of hair and chin were at once apparent, for he was nearly bald though he was not yet thirty, and his face would have fitted without much difficulty into any triangle large enough to hold it had his nose been placed at the apex. Not even by the most painful stretch of the habit of politeness could he have been called beautiful, yet Miss Thorneycroft's eyes softened at sight of him, and her lips took a very kindly curve. Encouraged by which things—more encouraged perhaps than Miss Thorneycroft would quite have approved had she been aware of it—he drew a chair against the end of the writing-table and sat down. For a moment or two he played gravely with two round crystal paperweights, tossing them from one hand to the other as the juggler we loved in our childish days tosses oranges. Then he spoke—

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Helen, of course.

The little gentleman put down his paperweights.

"Now don't tell me that," he said anxiously. "When pain and anguish wring the brow, a ministering angel is Dickie Tiark sometimes. What's wrong, Miss Thorneycroft?"

"I hope you don't imply that pain and anguish are wringing my brow, Mr. Tiark?"

Mr. Tiark studied her face frankly a few moments. His eyes were his only redeeming feature, but they were good.

"Of course," he said presently, and nothing could have exceeded the gravity with which he made a penny disappear up one sleeve and reappear down the other, "if you don't choose to tell me, that's—that's your affair. But if you would have let me know—what it is that is bothering you—and—and I had been able to help you in any way, I—I hope you know I would have done it—and never so much as asked you to say 'thank you'; but—of course—if you won't——"

Helen's look of entire amusement softened into gentleness. A little glow of cordiality and kindness lit up in her eyes, in the light of which Dickie Tiark sunned himself openly and unembarrassed.

"I don't know that I have any particular objection to saying 'thank you,' Mr. Tiark. I say it now, in all sincerity. But as for confiding in you in any way—if you have discovered that something is wrong,"—the colour deepening just a little under her clear skin—"you have also discovered what that something is."

"And you will stay here—with—with—"—the lady in his mind was his hostess. It is not always allowable to tell the plain unvarnished tale of what we truly think of our hostesses.

"No, Mr. Tiark."

Mr. Tiark drew a long breath of relief.

"I'm—I'm glad to hear that. Because you know, when lovely woman stoops to—to let her angry passions rise, there's sometimes the old gentleman to pay, Miss Thorneycroft."

He had risen, and Helen regarded him with an odd mixture of gravity, friendliness, and an irritated uncertainty as to what he might do next. She could never quite rid herself of the apprehension that he would suddenly produce a hot plum-pudding from his coat-tail pocket, or a couple of white rabbits from his handkerchief. The absurd half-expectation of developments of this kind that always haunted her in Dickie Tiark's company even drew her thoughts and attention from another uneasy little problem rising in her mind. Whence had come to Dickie Tiark this sudden anxiety on her account? Had he reason for anticipating anything more unpleasant than the covert sneer, the veiled insult, the innuendo that scorched and blasted under cover of a smile, that had been her portion lately? No definite reason, perhaps. But the man who is content to be taken as a fool is sometimes allowed odd little glimpses into the true selves of those who are fools enough so to take him, and circumstances had once or twice during the last few days thrown for him a brilliant side-light on the true inwardness of his hostess's feelings towards her young companion—side-lights that had left him illuminated—and afraid.

"Then you are going home?"

"Yes, I am going home."

She gathered up the little pile of envelopes, each with its card inside now, and looked quickly up again at her companion. He was gravely balancing a lead pencil on his nose, and the relief in his face was so unmistakable, that it seemed a pity to tell him she was not going home till September.

That same evening, as she was dressing for the eight o'clock dinner, her door opened and Mrs. MacArthur came in. She was paler than usual and her eyes shone a little.

"Miss Thorneycroft, you remember that little sandal-wood box that has my pearls in it? We put it into the Indian cabinet when I went away a fortnight ago, for safety, didn't we?"

"Yes." Helen turned quickly. She looked dazzlingly fair, almost startlingly pretty in her black tulle dinner-gown. The fact brought an added shade of dislike into Mrs. MacArthur's face.

"You have the keys. Is that you, Forbes? Come in! I hope you have been careful not to leave them about. There are a good many things in that cabinet I value."

"I have been very careful. They have never left my possession since you gave them to me."

"The day I went away? Well, of course, I hoped you would be careful. Be so good as to fetch me my necklace, will you, the one with the diamond snap?"

Helen ran downstairs on her quest, alert and cheerful. Mrs. Mac-

Arthur was civil, almost conciliatory, and the fact was a satisfaction in itself. No one was in the big drawing-room. The keys did not clink in her slender fingers, and the intricacies of the lock presented her with no difficulty. She drew the sandal-wood box from the back of the cabinet and opened it. For a moment she knelt in the soft August twilight with the box in her hand. Then she closed it, put it back in its place on the shelf, relocked the cabinet and went slowly upstairs. The big staircase seemed to heave and rock a little as she passed up it, and she did not notice that it was Dickie Tiark who, with a smile, stood back on the broad landing that she might pass. She went quietly into her own room, where Forbes was fastening her mistress's long gloves with a silver glove hook, and there was nothing to be read in her clear eyes but simple astonishment.

"Mrs. MacArthur, it is not there!"

"Not there! Have you put it somewhere else?"

"I have never touched it. I have never unlocked the cabinet since the day when we locked it together."

"And the keys have never been out of your possession?"

"Never! I have kept them in my pocket by day and under my pillow by night."

Mrs. MacArthur turned and looked at Forbes, and her look might have meant anything—or nothing.

"There is the dinner gong," she said quietly. "Forbes, come up here again when dinner is over. Those pearls must be found."

Helen sat through the long meal in a state of simple bewilderment. The absence of the necklace was annoying and incomprehensible, but as yet it had failed to occur to her that it might develop into a personal matter. Of course, with other valuables, it had been delivered into her charge and she was responsible for its safe keeping, but some explanation of its removal must exist somewhere, upon which point Mrs. MacArthur did not fail to insist directly dinner was over.

"You were the last to see it or touch it. It was put away in the cabinet, I saw you put it there myself. The keys, you say, have never been out of your possession. You must know something about it, Miss Thorneycroft!"

It was then that the first shade of fear, genuine, unmistakable fear, touched the astonishment in Helen's eyes.

\* "I know nothing at all about it. I have never touched anything in the cabinet; I have never opened it at all from the day we locked it together until now."

Mrs. MacArthur regarded her gravely a moment and then turned to Forbes.

"Will you please tell Mr. MacArthur I should be glad if he would come up here?"

"Mrs. MacArthur," said Helen passionately, "what are you daring to imply?"

"I imply nothing, Miss Thorneycroft. Jewels of mine are given

into your charge ; it has been impossible, by your own showing, for any one to take them out of it. I ask for their return, that is all."

Helen's lips parted, and by this time they were very pale. Yet Mrs. MacArthur's request was reasonable, and her expression, but for the sleepy gleam of gratified malice behind the heavy whiteness of her lowered lids, coldly polite. The door opened,—they were in Helen's own little sitting-room with its rose-covered chintzes and flower-filled vases, her little white bedroom lay beyond,—and Mr. MacArthur bustled in. The atmosphere, heavily electric, struck him at once. He looked from one to the other with doubtful eyes.

"What's all this ?" he asked blankly.

Involuntarily Helen drew a step nearer to him. He was her friend, he always had been, to which fact, and which fact alone, she owed her experiences of this evening.

"Miss Thorneycroft has had charge of my pearl necklace, amongst other things, and it is of some value. I ask her for it, and she cannot give it me. Will you ask her where it is ?"

Mr. MacArthur turned on Helen.

"Where is it ?" he demanded obediently, and his tone was abrupt enough to satisfy even Mrs. MacArthur, but in his eyes lurked anxiety—more, commiseration. Helen drew a step nearer.

"Mr. MacArthur, I don't know. I put it in the sandal-wood box in the Indian cabinet in the drawing-room ; Mrs. MacArthur watched me, and some one has taken it out."

"No one except herself can have taken it out !" with cold satisfaction. "The keys have never been out of her possession day or night ; she says so herself. I think we ought to search her boxes."

Helen's start of indignation ended in a frozen calm. She was delivered bound and helpless into the hands of this evil woman, and to submit to an indignity was better than to have it forced upon her.

"I'll see fair play, my dear," Mr. MacArthur assured her in an apoplectic whisper.

"What do you say ?" asked his wife, with her hand on the bell.

"I say it is a damned unpleasant business !" fiercely mopping an agitated face with a large silk handkerchief.

"I quite agree with you, though you needn't swear about it. We had better send for a constable. I believe it is—usual."

But Helen could brook no more.

"Mrs. MacArthur, your only object is to humiliate me. Surely what you propose is sufficient ; there need be no constable. Mr. MacArthur is here and Forbes is listening at the door. That ought to be enough, even for you."

Mrs. MacArthur looked with quiet satisfaction from one to the other of her auditors.

"Do you think she is afraid of what we may find ?"

"Hang it all, Miriam, no, I don't !" with a gasp at his own daring. "We had better have Forbes in," was all Mrs. MacArthur's reply.

Forbes, who, it is needless to remark, was no longer listening at the door, came obediently. One by one Miss Thorneycroft's worldly possessions were displayed by the acid-faced Abigail, who had by no means forgotten or forgiven her detection of a moment ago. When it came to the removal of piles of snowy "lingerie" from Miss Thorneycroft's drawers, Mr. MacArthur protested.

"I'm going," he announced breathlessly. "I—I can't stand this any longer, Miriam."

"Then," said Mrs. MacArthur, "I must send for Rogers, the village policeman."

The village policeman! Helen could have laughed but for the realisation that was forcing itself upon her that her position was desperately serious. Fate had placed in Mrs. MacArthur's hands the opportunity of punishing her for the many innocent crimes she had committed against her. It was an opportunity Mrs. MacArthur had ardently desired, and she was not in the least likely to neglect it—a fact that Mr. MacArthur appreciated quite as clearly as Helen did. He stayed; at least he could spare her the village policeman.

The "things" were replaced one by one, and he began to breathe more fully. But a little inlaid case lay on the toilet-table, and Mrs. MacArthur's evil eye was on it. Helen, in her vague relief, almost laughed.

"You don't think I should be likely to hide it there, Mrs. MacArthur?"

"Then you object to let us examine that?"

Helen's lips paled; the woman was dangerous.

"I object to nothing! You may examine that or anything else you please. The whole transaction is an outrage, and you know it! Pray carry it through."

Her keys lay on the table. She unlocked the little case and threw up the lid. The trays were full of girlish treasures—a string of gold filigree beads from an uncle in India, some broken jet that had belonged to her mother, brooches, lockets, bracelets, given as keepsakes by girl-friends at school, one or two little trinkets of more value, presents from Philip, her sister's husband and her own very good friend; nothing that could in any way justify Mrs. MacArthur's examination of them. But that lady went calmly on with her investigation. Reward, we are told in a new set of proverbs lately presented to us, is its own virtue. Suddenly she turned upon her little audience of three, satisfaction radiating from every inch of her, a small oblong of green pasteboard held between her fingers.

"I thought I should find something," she said.

It was not surprising; she had, on the whole, good reason for thinking so. The sight added yet another shade of colour to Mr. MacArthur's sufficiently florid complexion. Helen looked blankly from the little slip of green pasteboard to him.

"What is it?"

"It—it—well, it looks like a pawn ticket," he reluctantly admitted.

"Harriet Thorn, that is the name it is made out in: one pearl necklace!—it's exactly what I expected. Kensington, what a respectable place for a pawnshop! She will have to go, Harvey."

Helen pushed back the soft hair from her temple with a quick, white wrist, a trick she had in moments of excitement. Mr. MacArthur was regarding her with eyes all trouble. Even he was a little staggered.

"What does she mean?" she asked a little breathlessly.

Mrs. MacArthur laughed.

"You pretend very well, but really I think we have had about enough of it. This is my property; I shall keep it!"—tucking the little green ticket into her purse, as she indeed had every right. "Do you know," turning suddenly, furiously on poor stunned Helen, "that if I chose I could have you arrested, could send you to Meltham prison here and now? I am not going to, for which I hope you are as grateful as you ought to be. I only ask one thing of you! Go! Go now!"

Slowly, gradually Helen realised that she was alone, humbled, disgraced, turned out! For some time she stood absolutely still, deprived by the shock of all power of movement. Then came a rush of passionate anger, vivid, scorching, electrifying. Go! Indeed she would go! Not another night, not another hour would she spend under a roof where such outrage was possible. With eyes that flashed and hands that trembled she flung into a heap all that belonged to her. A low tap at the door roused her.

"If you please, ma'am, my mistress has sent me to help you to pack!" It was Forbes, acid satisfaction glistening in her eye. Helen accepted her services; anything that would expedite matters was welcome, even Forbes. Then came the footman with her boxes, open-eyed and open-mouthed; the circumstances of Miss Thorneycroft's dismissal had lost nothing from Forbes in the telling. An hour later Helen flew downstairs ready for her journey, and Dickie Tiark stepped out from the shadows of the hall and caught her hand, all unreproved, as she passed him.

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" he groaned. "What is it, now it has come?"

"Mr. Tiark, she accuses me of theft! Threatens me with—prosecution!"

Helen was too excited to realise that she was telling the story of her own ignominy. Dickie took her other hand as well.

"Let her prosecute," he implored. "Let her do her worst, hoist herself with her own pétard. A good counsel would knock the bottom out of her case in half-an-hour. We'll get the best man in England for you, put it into Lewis's hands——"

"Who will, Mr. Tiark?"

"I will," said the little gentleman boldly.

Helen shook her head. It was not easy to speak, for for the first time that evening tears threatened.

"I couldn't, even if I could—allow—what you suggest—I couldn't bear it. There is only one thing I can do,—go, go *now!*"—with a bitter imitation of the unforgotten sound of the words,—“but before I go, thank you, Mr. Tiark.”

The tears welled up and brimmed over. Dickie Tiark groaned in impotent sympathy.

“You'll not go alone at this time of night!”

The door of Mr. MacArthur's own sanctum opened cautiously. Helen snatched her hands away from Dickie's and turned. Mr. MacArthur himself, the end of his nose and one eye cautiously appearing round the door, was beckoning her.

“You'll want some money,” he whispered; “you mustn't go off in a huff without—everything you're likely to need, child!”

“Mr. MacArthur,” Helen broke in passionately, “do you believe——”

Mr. MacArthur shook his head with vigour, once again mopping an agitated face with a big handkerchief. He was stout, he was bald, he was well turned forty, but he was the only man in all her life that Helen had ardently desired to kiss.

“I don't understand it at all,” with as much emphasis as his cautious tones would permit, “and I'm quite sure you don't, my dear. You must go; it's the only safe way, but you needn't go far—and I'll see you again to-morrow, and we'll clear this up. Take this, like a good little girl, now *do!*” pressing a ten-pound note into her hand. But Helen put it steadily back.

“I don't need it; I have money, plenty! And I'm going home, Mr. MacArthur. I can get to Meltham Junction by eleven, and catch the night mail north. Good-bye—and thank you—and Mr. Tiark.”

“Good-bye, and if ever any one tells you I believed it, don't you listen—because I couldn't.”

He said it aloud and in the hall, though he trembled at his own boldness. The words followed Helen as she ran down the steps and passed out into the night alone, realising dimly as she went that she who goes through life with all the men for champions and all the women for enemies is not as lucky as she is generally supposed to be.

## CHAPTER II

IT was the same evening, about the time when Helen was dressing for dinner, Major Keith Carstairs was also dressing in his bedroom at the Langham, but not for dinner. His portmanteau, with his rug, sticks, and other masculine impedimenta tightly strapped against it, lay on a chair near; even now the shrill double whistle that should summon a hansom to take him to King's Cross sounded from the hotel steps. He glanced at himself once or twice in the long glass, to assure himself that no little point in his toilet offended his soldierly precision, and took a last glance about his room whilst once again the double whistle

shrilled out on the heated, hazy London air. A letter lying open on his toilet table caught his eye. He read it once again, and his face clouded as he did so.

"DEAR CARSTAIRS,—Start a bit earlier and break your journey at Meltham as you go north, will you? I'm staying at the 'White Hart,' and there's a little matter I'm anxious to talk over with you if you're willing.—Yours,

HENRY L'ESTRANGE."

"Wonder what he wants me for," he muttered, moving an uneasy shoulder as the recollection of one particular "little matter" it was quite possible he wanted him for stirred in the background of his mind, and then, obeying an impulse he could not quite have explained, he struck a match, touched the corner of the letter with the flame, and watched it slowly curl and blacken in the empty grate.

Once again the whistle sounded.

"Confound it! where are all the hansoms?" he said, with a vexed laugh. "I shall lose my train if they don't look sharp."

It was not without intention that he was waiting for his hansom in the seclusion of his own room, though his reason, carrying with it as it did more than a suspicion of coxcombry, was kept well away from where he could look at it. A lively and dashing widow, who had been his fellow-sojourner in the big British caravanserai for nearly a fortnight, had marked him so very clearly for her own, that he was nervously anxious to avoid the impressive farewell she was likely to take of him, should she meet him under the eyes of all and sundry in the hall. Not that he acknowledged it, even to himself, though he had been fidgeting about between window and door, waiting for the jingle of harness and the clap of the hansom doors, a good five minutes now. There were a hundred little last things for him to do, opening and shutting mechanically the drawers of his dressing-table as he assured himself of it.

The sight of a small morocco case in one of them sent a jerk of surprise all over him.

"By Jove! fancy my forgetting that!" he said slowly, and then he stood a moment balancing the little case in his hand.

There was no time to unstrap his portmanteau and put it in its usual place, his writing-case. If he slipped the tiny case as it was into one of his pockets there was decided danger of losing it, and it was of considerable value. He opened the case and moved it absently, that the stone, set in the ring inside, might catch the light. It was a pink diamond, of peculiar purity and lustre. It sparkled and gleamed and scintillated in its setting of dull Indian gold, and sent little beams and arrows of light all over the well-kept brown fingers that held it. He half raised it from its white satin bed. It stuck a little, for the case did not belong to it, and it fitted too tightly into its place. The safest, the only sensible thing to do was to wear it. Major Carstairs hesitated, the ring half out of the slit that held it,

"Keep it, my boy; it'll help keep my memory green, but don't wear it. Promise me you won't wear it!"

The scene rose before his mind as the words rang in his ears again. The little patch of tents on the hillside, the mountains rising, grim and rocky, all about them, his Colonel, the man he worshipped as boys and boys only can worship, carried into camp, a patch of blood upon his tunic, more blood, red and frothy, oozing from his lips, every breath coming with a smothered, coughing sob, and an Afghan bullet through his lungs. That was the first time he had seen the gem that was now glistening with, to his fancy, a sinister light before him; the elder man had drawn it, almost with a last feeble effort, from his hand.

"Don't wear it. I've worn it for the first time to-day—and this has happened."

It had been a coincidence, of course. Yet the coincidence and his reverence for the dead man's wishes had been sufficient to keep the ring from his finger so far, and it was fifteen years ago. For fifteen years he had kept it, partly as a relic of the man he had loved, which motive touched one side of his character, and partly from the reflection that if ever the chronic shortness of cash from which he suffered reached an acute stage it was of considerable value, which touched the other.

A low knock roused him.

"Ansom's 'ere, sir."

He raised his well-groomed, dark head suddenly, dropped the case, slipped the ring on his finger, and strode over to his bedroom door.

"All right; there's my bag."

He found it difficult to forget that he had the ring on his finger, and the fact worried him a little. It was the flash of the stone on a hand unaccustomed to the foppery of jewels, something in the odd and unusual beauty of the setting, he told himself, but in his heart of hearts he knew it was neither of these things. He must have a deeper strand of folly and superstition in his composition than he had imagined, to be so influenced by such a trifle, he concluded half angrily; but by the time Meltham was reached he found he had other things to think about besides his unwanted adornment.

The hall of the "White Hart" was almost dark as he stepped in from the soft August dusk outside.

"Mr. L'Estrange, sir? First landing, Number 17."

He sprang upstairs without waiting for the man to precede him; prompt and independent action was natural to him. The gas in the corridor was lighted, but no one happened to be there. He knocked lightly at the door of Number 17.

"Come in," said a deep voice.

A tall figure raised itself in the twilight by the window.

"Is that you, Carstairs?" it asked,

Carstairs straightened himself slowly. The tall figure by the window stood quite still with both hands on the back of a chair, and when one who has been at least an acquaintance for nearly twenty years suddenly forgets to shake hands, there is generally a reason for it.

"Yes, it's me!"—not too grammatically, and with a touch of wonder in his voice. "You wanted to see me, didn't you?"

"Yes, come here—not too close. Sit down there!"

But Carstairs only stared. Then he slipped a silver matchbox out of his waistcoat pocket, struck a wax vesta and lighted the gas behind him.

"Let's have a look at you, old fellow," he said quietly.

The tall figure before him was gaunt and thin and shadowy, the face was pale, worn, almost fleshless, and the eyes, deeply set in it, burnt and blazed and glowed after a fashion that made Carstairs catch his breath a little.

"Are you all right, L'Estrange?" he asked, a shade of anxiety in his manner.

"No," was the gloomy reply. "I want to talk to you—about Edith."

A sudden absence of all expression fell like a mask over Carstairs' face.

"Oh," he said, and then he sat down, with his slender, brown hands drooping forward over his knees, and waited. The diamond in his ring made a splash of liquid light above his fingers. The sight of it gave him a distinct shock. But for that sinister gleam about his hand might this interview have been a different one? L'Estrange, his head bent, his hands behind him, had taken to walking moodily up and down.

"Sin! The reek of it! It stinks to heaven!" closing his delicate and working nostrils with his long, thin fingers as he spoke; and his voice low, thrilling, curiously penetrating, sent a nervous start all over his listener, though he was not given to nervousness. "How long, O Lord, how long shall we suffer, ere we put off the body of this death! Do not our deeds cry aloud to God, we, the sons and daughters of iniquity, and what can one man do amongst so many? Lord, strengthen my hand and touch my tongue with fire. Here, at least, I will do what one man can!"

His tones were low, vibrating and ominously significant. Carstairs straightened himself slowly, drawing farther and farther back in his chair in his astonishment, an astonishment just touched with fear.

"He's mad," he told himself. "He has brooded and brooded till he has overthrown his reason. L'Estrange, old fellow," he said aloud, "come and sit down and let's talk this over. I don't understand you, I don't indeed."

L'Estrange came over to the armchair he had been sitting in when Carstairs entered. As he passed the table he turned out the gas. The windows, long French ones, were open on to the balcony, and

in the soft summer dusk the two men could see one another's faces fairly well. L'Estrange threw himself back in his chair and lightly laid together the tips of fingers that trembled.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" he demanded.

"What about?"

"You know what about."

Carstairs pressed one side of his heavy moustache into his mouth and bit it viciously. What a fool he had been to come to Meltham and lay himself open to this kind of thing! Why had he not disregarded that curt request for a word or two with him, as he would have disregarded it had it come from any one in the world but Edith's brother? The silence lasted long enough to be oppressive. L'Estrange broke it.

"Well?" he said curtly.

Carstairs pulled himself together.

"Look here, L'Estrange," he said gravely. "I wouldn't stand this sort of thing from any one in the world but you. But you are—her brother, and—and—well, up to now I've always stood well with you. So I'm going to try and do what a fellow doesn't often do, and make you see how I—I really feel in this matter. As far as—as Mrs. Colquhoun is concerned, you are—wronging her—and misjudging me. I—I worship her, I tell you so frankly. I always did and I always shall—but—if you think I want her to worship me back again"—with rather a grim smile—"you are mistaken. In the first place, it wouldn't be possible; and in the second, if it were possible, I—I shouldn't feel towards her as I do now. I wonder if you see what I mean. I'm not a good hand at expressing myself. I wonder if I can make you realise the—the utter absence of—of all trace of——"

But L'Estrange threw himself back almost writhing in his chair, and silenced his hesitating efforts at self-analysis with a sharp sound of scorn.

"Words! words! words!" he said with withering sarcasm. "Do you think I don't know your cursed modern ideas? Do you think I am to be deceived by the veil of delicacy and idealism with which it is the fashion nowadays to cover the brutality beneath? And now, in Edith's true interest, for Edith's sake, to save her from the pit that yawns before her, I take this matter into my own hands——"

A knock at the door stayed him as his voice, full and sonorous, rang in the quiet room. A man-servant put his head in.

"Did you call, sir?"

"No," said L'Estrange mildly. "If I want you I will ring."

Carstairs moved uneasily.

"For heaven's sake be careful, L'Estrange," he said hurriedly. "That fellow heard you! You are making a serious affair out of a very simple matter; you are putting a wrong construction, giving a most unpleasant turn to a perfectly innocent relationship."

"And what are you doing?" asked L'Estrange sharply. "Follow-

ing about like her shadow a woman whom so far the faintest breath of reproach has never dared to touch, pestering her with attentions that before long will bring a hornet's nest about her ears. You scheme to get introductions to houses she visits; you follow her about unblushingly from one end of England to another; you are going up to Combe Salterton now because she is there."

Carstairs bit his lip; it was too true, all but one assertion—his attentions did not "pester" her.

"That's all very well, L'Estrange," he said hoarsely. "But you weren't always as particular—if all one hears is true."

L'Estrange dropped back in his chair and a slight shiver passed over him. It was a grim history that his words had stung Carstairs to touch upon, and already, through the irritation that had mastered him, he was conscious of a sharp compunction that he had touched upon it at all. L'Estrange leaned forward again, his eyes burning and glowing in the dusk with a light that was not quite sane.

"And you do not see," he said huskily, "that—that is why——"

"I'm awfully sorry I mentioned it, old man," said Carstairs quickly.

"That makes me tremble," his voice shaking perceptibly, "to see you and Edith stand—where you stand now. One of us ought to shoot you, you know, either me or Colquhoun. I told him so less than a week ago."

"The deuce you did!" said Carstairs slowly. "And may I ask what he said? It's likely to interest me, you know."

"He—he laughed at me; said he was not likely to drag his wife's name in the dust for what was, to his thinking, the purest romance on your part—fool, blind idiot that he is."

"He is neither fool, blind, nor idiot!" said Carstairs hotly. "He sees things as they are—which is more than you do."

"So that it devolves upon me——"

"What does? The shooting?" with a curt laugh, astonished and indignant, but faintly amused too.

"To—to put a stop to it—if it lies in my power."

"To put a stop to what?" with ominous quiet.

"It amounts to this, Carstairs," and Carstairs saw his hand slip into his breast coat-pocket, and reappear with something in it. "Give me your word that you will not see Edith again, or you don't leave this room alive."

Something gleamed in his hand under the last faint flush of the August twilight. Carstairs sat absolutely still with a sudden conviction of the entire wisdom of his attitude. L'Estrange was mad, but he was not so mad as that his hand should lose its cunning, and he could snuff a candle at thirty paces. A faint chill crept about his heart and his lips went a little cold. He had faced death in many places and under many aspects, but never had he looked him so fairly in the eyes as now, sitting in incongruous comfort in his arm-chair, with a twenty years' friend in another opposite. He leant forward to speak.

There was a sharp click in the shadows before him, and very well he recognised it.

"Keep still! Promise! I give you five minutes."

The curiously even, quite expressionless voice ceased. Carstairs's heart began to beat hard, for his life hung on a thread and he knew it. A moment's relaxation of vigilance in the watchful eyes shining out of the dusk opposite, and he would spring and wrest that murderous little weapon from his hand and end the situation that way, but whilst those eyes were on him his first movement would undoubtedly be his last. He spoke, a trace of appeal and no sign of anger in his voice.

"Don't be a fool, L'Estrange. If you shoot me they'll hang you."

"I don't much care. I shall have saved Edith."

"From what, man?"

"From *you!*" with bitter emphasis.

"But I assure you, by all that's holy, she has nothing to fear from me. She knows I—I admire her, and she doesn't mind, and neither does Colquhoun, and as heaven is above us I ask—I *want* nothing more. For God's sake put that revolver down, Harry, and end this farce."

"Promise! You have only three minutes."

"And if I do promise I shouldn't keep it. A man isn't bound by anything wrung from him in this way."

"I know you better than you know yourself or you *would* promise. You may not give your word, but if you do you'll keep it."

"I shall not give it!"

He was watching him closely, warily, as he spoke through his set teeth. He had not the slightest intention of being shot down like a wild beast in a trap, and a moment's inattention meant it.

"Then—"

With a sudden spring Carstairs knocked up the hand that held the revolver—not a moment too soon. There was a sharp report, a low groan, and L'Estrange swayed in his chair, fell forward, and slipped with a dull thud to the ground. There was a sudden shiver of the muscles, a convulsive stretching and relaxing of the long limbs, and he lay with his head smothered in the folds of the crimson repp curtains, terribly, horribly still.

For some little time Carstairs was hardly less so, as he stood listening for the rush of footsteps up the stairs, waiting for the coming of those who should find him alone with the dead. But was he dead?

He dropped on his knees by L'Estrange's side and tore open his waistcoat and shirt. There was not the faintest pulsation under his hand, and, though the flesh under the flannel singlet still felt soft and warm, about the hands was gathering that peculiar chill that only means one thing. His jaw had dropped a little, too, the face was settling already into rigid and unfamiliar lines. It hardly needed the small, blue hole in the temple, with a drop or two of blood trickling beneath, to emphasise the dread truth.

"It was your own fault, old chap, you know it, don't you?" he muttered, and then he mechanically buttoned shirt and waistcoat again, and, wiping the beads of perspiration that stood thickly on his bronzed forehead, stood up to await those who should come and find him there.

Minute after minute passed and nobody came. Slowly and by degrees the truth dawned upon him—nobody was coming. The report of a pistol is not as loud a noise as is generally supposed; a brake full of men, all singing a popular music-hall ditty at the top of their voices, was passing as it occurred, and no one had heard it. It was his duty to go downstairs and explain, if he could, what had happened.

He sat down suddenly, limply, in the chair in which he had listened to L'Estrange's amazing ultimatum. Things were not easy to explain. To right himself, to make at all understandable what had happened, meant dragging Edith's name in that dust to which he had sworn so often no folly of his should lower it. She would owe the fact to no folly of his; the unfounded suspicions of a madman were entirely and alone responsible for what would inevitably overtake her; but Carstairs was clear-sighted enough to see that that fact would avail him little. She might forgive her brother; she would certainly never forgive him. The pistol had dropped from L'Estrange's nerveless hand as he fell, and now lay on the ground between the two men, the living and the dead. With a sudden movement of his foot he sent it rolling into the shadowy folds of the window curtain as it lay upon the floor. And he ought to be downstairs telling his tale now. He dropped his damp and haggard face into his hands.

"I can't do it," he groaned, "I can't, for Edith's sake."

Presently he lifted his head, a sudden hope dawning in his eyes. It might be possible to mention the quarrel and suppress the cause of it. It was a faint chance, but it was a chance. He shook his head a little as the hope died. The man who had interrupted them, attracted by L'Estrange's raised voice, had undoubtedly heard also what L'Estrange had said. With such a clue as he would supply, the cause of the quarrel could not be kept quiet. His worship of Colquhoun's wife, chivalrous, blameless, rooted in all that was best in his disposition as it was, would nevertheless prove the curse to her that all such worship is. He would see her pilloried, held up to the lightning blast of evil suspicion born of evil minds, cruelly judged, coldly condemned, and through him. Would she not hate him? Would she not have every right to hate him?

It was beyond him; it was a harder task than Fate at its most malicious had the right to require of any man, to bring deliberately upon his own head and hers the consequences that would follow on this night's work. He would sit where he was in dogged patience, till he was found and compelled to speak, but until he was compelled he would be silent.

It was then, as he sat realising slowly but vividly—he was a man

with an imagination—one by one the probable results of the evil circumstance that had befallen him, that the fact that there was in the situation an element of danger, personal danger, dawned upon him. What if those who should find him should refuse to believe his explanation? What if suspicion—? Slowly but clearly he realised that his own delay in giving notice of what had happened would give cause, good cause, for suspicion. The thought was unbearable. He sprang to his feet: he would face and defy, once and for all, so intolerable a position. A remembrance took the strength from his knees and the fire from his eyes. To right himself meant to betray Edith. He sat down again limply. That clearly was impossible.

And slowly, as he sat with that dread Thing, every moment more rigid, the chill of whose presence seemed to strike through his warm veins like ice, lying at his feet, an idea came to him. Necessity, the imperative necessity of shielding from evil comment a woman's fair fame, had forced upon him a coward's part. There was still open to him a coward's refuge—to run away. He sat up, his brain moving more quickly. Circumstances were all in his favour. No one knew of his intended visit to Meltham, the letter summoning him was burnt. No one had seen him clearly enough to recognise him again since he had been in the hotel. He had taken no ticket to Meltham; the ticket he was travelling with was the return half of the one with which he had travelled from York not quite a week ago. He had intended to ask permission to break his journey north at Meltham, a permission that was always accorded, but, as sometimes occurs in country stations, no one had been at the top of the subway to take his ticket, and he had run down the steps and passed out into the little town questioned by none. If he could get out of the hotel unnoticed, if he could reach the station platform unquestioned?

With a nauseous distaste for the part Fate had forced upon him, with a clear understanding of the deadly danger of misconstruction he was tempting by his own action, this man, brave as a lion in all that concerned himself, deliberately decided to avail himself, for a woman's sake, of that last resource of pitiful poltroonery—he would run away. It may be questioned whether, when in his own mind he fiercely branded himself white-livered and chicken-hearted, he had ever been braver in his life.

Fortune favoured him, though he told himself, with a heart-throb, he had no longer the right to class himself among those she is specially supposed to favour. No one happened to meet him or pass him either in corridor, staircase, or hall. His heart beat heavily, painfully, as the friendly darkness swallowed him. There was only the station now. He was three-quarters of an hour early for the train, and the little knot of porters, standing half in half out of the lamp-room at the further end of the platform, took no notice of him. Twenty minutes before the express was due, barriers were closed and stolid officials scrutinised every ticket presented, but

no one concerned himself about the quiet passenger in the corner of the general waiting-room, absorbed in his paper. The minutes dragged themselves along, and the station woke up suddenly to hurrying, shouting, active life. Then a big bell rang somewhere, a hum, rush, roar filled the vaulted roof, the express was coming in. Major Carstairs seized his belongings and hurried out of the waiting-room—a moment more and he would be absolutely safe. A lady, hurrying in, met him face to face on the threshold. She looked up as he stood aside to let her pass, a flash of recognition in a pair of bright hazel eyes.

"Good evening, Major Carstairs," she said clearly.

### CHAPTER III

IT is the most abominable thing I ever heard of. The woman ought to be hanged!"

Anita, her abundant fair hair loosely held back by a ribbon, very insufficiently clothed beneath her pale-blue wrapper, roused from her morning sleep before eight with the information that Miss Thorneycroft had arrived unexpectedly, and viewing every aspect the case presented with much resentment, was indignant enough to satisfy anybody. Helen, tired, travel-stained, and finding the circumstances of her return to her brother-in-law's roof even more trying than she had anticipated, sat opposite to her, and both ladies were imbibing what consolation could be afforded by the early cup of tea the nervous strain of such unexpected happenings had promptly demanded.

"But I do think," Anita went on, "you might have managed a little differently. Surely the woman would have given you house-room till morning! And if she wouldn't, you might have stayed the night somewhere, and come home—well—respectably, Nell!"

Her feeling of irritation and injury was unreasonable, even unjust, she knew. What had happened was not Nell's fault, still, but for Nell's existence, such disagreeable experiences would have been impossible. Helen's delicate eyebrows went up a little wearily. Yesterday in the horrible house where insult, contumely, outrage had been her portion, Paradise itself in imagination could not have offered her more of rest and refreshment than did Combe Salterton. She glanced round the pretty octagon room in which they were sitting, four sides of which were window, down into the tree-filled ravine on the side of which the house stood, with its foaming, flashing burn racing at the bottom till it spread itself in sudden freedom on the golden sand and slid quietly into the sea, and the proud curve of her pretty mouth relaxed a little.

"I had only one idea in the world—to come to you," she said curtly. Anita sighed and softened.

"Oh, well, dear, of course. Only we shall have to invent some reason for your coming in with the milk. Scarlet fever, or diphtheria,

or something—and you were sent home in a hurry. How many people know, Nell?"

"Mr. MacArthur and Mr. Tiark; he was the only visitor fortunately, —and the servants, of course."

"Dickie *Tiark*?"

"Yes."

"Then it's hopeless to think of keeping it quiet," with despairing resignation; "he'll tell everybody!"

"He won't," indignantly; "I'm certain he won't tell a soul—for my sake."

"Oh!" said Anita with intelligence.

"I didn't mean that, Nan," flushing quickly.

"Then what did you mean?"

Helen studied the bottom of her teacup for a moment in silence.

"Do you think I ought to keep it quiet?" she asked presently.

Anita sat up in blank dismay.

"You *don't* mean to say—you are not contemplating——"

"Mr. Tiark seemed to think it was the only thing I could do!" hurriedly. "He offered to put it into Sir George Lewis's hands himself. He begged me to—to fight it, to punish her, if I could, as—" with a painful flush—"as she ought to be punished."

"And then you tell me——"

"Oh, don't be ridiculous, Nan. You know I never should and never could dream of accepting such an offer!"

"Of course you wouldn't! Still it's significant that he made it. But you surely wouldn't dream of making a shameful business of this sort public."

"There is nothing shameful about it as far as I am concerned!"

"Fancy seeing yourself on every bill—the heroine of a *cause célèbre*."

"What *cause célèbre*? Who's a heroine?"

It was Philip, irreproachably attired, and intent on the hour's quiet he always secured to himself in Anita's own especial sunny sanctum before the nine-o'clock breakfast. Never before had Anita divided possession with him at this hour in the morning. If she struggled downstairs, yawning and apologetic, before ten, it was all any one expected of her. His astonished eyes went from her to Helen, and there they stayed.

"My dear girl!" he said slowly.

"Nell has come home," Anita informed him rather unnecessarily. "She is accused of theft," she finished quietly.

The matter-of-fact, bald statement, unadorned and undeniable, struck Miss Thorneycroft's overstrained nerves suddenly as entirely ludicrous, irresistibly funny. At the pure comedy of it she broke into a peal of excited laughter. The grave amazement in her brother-in-law's eyes rebuked her ill-timed levity into a sudden silence. Yet she had felt at the moment that she must either laugh or cry, and she was by no means a woman to whom tears are a luxury.

"It's true," said Anita, nodding confirmation at her husband with an energy that brought her soft hair all trembling about her face after a fashion that would have meant pure delight to a painter. "Mr. Tiark wants her to bring an action against that horrible woman. He says she ought to put it into Sir George Lewis's hands."

"Mr. Tiark? *Dickie* Tiark?"

Anita nodded again.

"I said she might as well have told the bellman," answering his tone with entire comprehension. "But she is quite convinced that he will be all that is discreet—for her sake," she finished drily.

"Oh!" said Philip, in precisely the same tone as Anita's had been on the same monosyllable, and then he put his hands behind his back and studied his sister-in-law for a few moments with quite a new interest.

"It's absurd to talk about putting it into any one's hands," said poor Helen, desperately wrenching the conversation back into its proper channel. "How could I possibly do such a thing?"

"You mean——"

"I mean that it would cost money and I haven't any!"

"But, my dear girl, that consideration must not be allowed to weigh with you. If it really is advisable to fight the case, the money is ready, of course."

"I suppose you mean—your money," said Helen steadily.

"Of course I mean my money. This matter touches us all. You must allow what is best for us all to be done."

Helen sprang up and went and stood in the window, gazing with wide and miserable eyes over the expanse of heaving, glistening water, looking hazy and hot already under the August sun. For the moment unreasoning resentment against Philip was her uppermost feeling, though she was ashamed of it. She liked him, but he was always so exasperatingly right. But for having, in obstinate disregard of his wishes, almost entreaties, persisted in placing her little fortune in the hands of a man he mistrusted, who had invested it in ways of which he disapproved and ended by losing it all, she would not have stood here as she stood now, helpless and penniless, indebted to his kindness for the roof over her head and the clothes on her back. But for having, in spite of his protests, almost prayers, that she would not let her pride and independence drive her into a position he had prophesied all too correctly she would find intolerable, persisted in taking herself off his hands and earning her own living as companion to Mrs. MacArthur, she would not have stood before him as she stood now, an incarnate example of the wisdom of his counsels.

He came over and stood beside her.

"What do you wish to do, you yourself?"

Helen was conscious of a sudden revolution in her mental attitude. All her troubles were the result of disobeying Philip's wishes. In future she would do—oh, most difficult of tasks!—exactly as she was told.

"I wish to be guided entirely by you."

His face softened suddenly and very pleasantly.

"You are unexpectedly tractable," he said.

"It is time I was," she answered steadily, for there is no surrender so complete as that of the proud woman who has made up her mind to own herself in the wrong.

"But putting me and my possible wishes on one side, what are yours?" he persisted.

"Oh," with a sharp shrill in her voice that told something of what the strain had been, "if I could only forget! I feel as if, after to-day, I should die if it were mentioned again."

"That is what I wanted to get at," he said slowly. "And now tell me exactly what has happened."

Helen dropped limply into the chair he drew forward for her, and he seated himself opposite. Anita listened in the background; she generally listened in the background if Helen and Philip were together. A few crisp sentences and he was in possession of the salient points of the case. His face settled into satisfied lines. He liked a woman who could tell a story clearly, and it was a relief to be spared Anita's never-ending explanations. Besides, the *cause célèbre* they were threatened with did not look as inevitable as it had done a moment ago.

"What was her motive, should you say?"

"Jealousy! She has been jealous of me all along."

In spite of himself Philip's eyes sought hers with a quick question in them. She was very pretty, and so entirely free from affectation or coquetry as to be dangerously attractive. The colour flew all over her pale face.

"Philip! He was old enough to be my father!—and the nicest little man anywhere. He never dreamt of such a thing. Besides, it wasn't so much him as the other. She is a handsome woman and accustomed to monopolise all of them—and Mr. Tiark——"

She broke off suddenly. This was the third time she had mentioned Mr. Tiark.

"H'm!" said Philip quietly. "Then you think she has managed the whole thing?"

"She and Forbes, the maid. Forbes hated me, I suppose, because her mistress did. She meant to humiliate me before the men who had been misguided enough to admire me—and she succeeded."

"Don't let it make you bitter, Nell," he said gently.

"How can I help it? Oh, do you think I shall be obliged to fight it, to let everybody know?"

"Well, as far as I see at present, I'm not sure we have a case to fight. It isn't libel unless she maliciously publishes it; it isn't wrongful dismissal, because she didn't dismiss you; she suggested you should go—and you went. But of course I'm not sure. However, I'll consult L'Estrange about it. He will know if any one does."

"You will tell Mr. L'Estrange! And he will tell Mrs. Colquhoun!"

"My dear Helen," half smiling at the dismayed face opposite, "if you feel like that at the idea of two people hearing of it, what will you feel like if it really does get into the papers?"

"I couldn't bear it! I think it would kill me!"

"It wouldn't be any worse for you than it would for the rest of us," put in Anita, despondently.

"Oh yes, it would, my dear!"

He was just—more, he was truly kind, but Helen writhed all the same. His very justice and kindness only made her position of thorn in the family flesh more acutely painful. She flushed and paled rapidly, a sudden quiver and ripple broke up the steadily maintained composure of her face. Philip marked both little signs with the eye of a man fairly well versed in feminine peculiarities.

"Go and lie down," he said, "and meanwhile I'll think things over. Never mind, Nell," with a friendly smile as she rose to obey him; "it will be all right. I'll pull you through, you know."

Helen set her teeth on her lower lip and held back the threatening tears till she was safely outside the door. After all, there were only two of them. Anita looked up with a clearing brow as the door closed.

"I shall write and ask Dickie Tiark down here," she announced with decision.

Philip looked a little doubtful.

"It would be a good thing for Helen; I don't deny that," he said slowly. "But!"

"He seems to be the only one who knows outside the house, and if once Helen is engaged to him he certainly won't say anything!" in shrewd conclusion. "You are not in earnest. You wouldn't help Helen to fight it, would you?"

"You may be quite sure I am no more anxious to figure in the papers than you are. But in this case what is best for Helen must be done. She must be considered first, you know."

"Oh, but I don't see that at all."

"Then you ought, my dear. And as for asking Dickie Tiark down here, don't forget Carstairs is coming, and the Colquhouns and L'Estrange, and we can't do with more than five, you know."

"He will be five!"

Which was undeniable. Beresford shrugged his shoulders, but he hardly looked as though the prospect of a visit from Dickie Tiark afforded him unmixed satisfaction.

It had taken him some little time to decide which of the two pretty sisters he should honour by making his wife. Not that he put it so, even to himself; he was both by breeding and instincts a gentleman, but at the bottom of his heart lay the distinct conviction that it was an honour. It would have been quite as easy to bestow the calm affection he had neatly wrapped up, ticketed, and put away ready to be given to the lady who should sit at the head of his table, on Helen as on Anita. But there was about Helen a touch of independence, a wilfulness just

tinged with caprice that might easily degenerate into obstinacy under injudicious handling. He had made the common mistake of confounding weakness with meekness, and had chosen Anita deliberately as the more manageable of the two. A want of toughness in the moral fibre sometimes leads to odd developments. It led Anita, who proved by no means as tractable as he had anticipated, into subterfuge, evasion, trifling insincerities that galled him inexpressibly, that even drove him sometimes to regret that he had not chosen Helen's bolder methods of opposition; they would at least have been honest. No doubt that, had he wished, he could have so chosen, ever beset him, and there is a touch of the dog in the manger about most of us. So that he regarded Dickie Tiark's new pretensions with a faint irritation he could not himself quite understand.

It was not until late in the afternoon that Helen saw her sister again. Refreshed by a long sleep, rejoiced by the remembrance of her own reflection in a white muslin tea-gown all over little lavender-edged frills—she had never dared to wear a tea-gown at Mrs. MacArthur's—mentally braced and buckled by the blessed inclination towards cheerfulness with which some fairy godmother had endowed her in her cradle, all the world looked different.

Anita glanced up at her from her basket-chair on the lawn with distinct satisfaction; after all, two pretty women in a house are indefinitely better than one.

"Make yourself look as nice as you can for dinner to-night, Nell," she said cordially. "Major Carstairs will be here."

"Will he? Oh, of course," said Helen half absently.

"And why of course?" asked her sister.

If Helen had answered! If she had had time to say what was in her mind and on her tongue: "I saw him at Meltham. I wondered if he were coming here then!" life might have been a different matter to Miss Thorneycroft. She was always under the impression later on that she had said it, but as a matter of fact she had not time. At that moment a footman with tea and the afternoon post came across the lawn. Anita was instantly deep in a voluminous correspondence, and the whole unimportant little circumstance died in Helen's mind and was buried under a mountain of more personal matters. When Anita slowly came back to time and things present, Helen asked a question.

"Is any one else coming besides Major Carstairs?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Colquhoun, and Mr. L'Estrange to-morrow, and"—suddenly interested in the roses at her belt—"I've written to ask Dickie Tiark for Thursday. Do you think he'll accept?"

"Oh, he's quite sure to," with an unconscious sigh.

"Yes, that's what I thought," said Anita quietly.

(*To be continued.*)





A DISTANT VIEW OF ST. PIETERS

By AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE

## ST. PETER'S AT ROME

FIFTY years ago, to deny or uphold the fact of St. Peter having been at Rome, was like a badge of partisanship for "Low Church" or "High Church." Volumes were wasted in ignorant refutation of unexamined history. But the fact is quite established now—the controversy silenced for ever. St. Jerome, Tertullian, and Eusebius protested on the subject, and in vain for many minds, but now the great antiquarian Lanciani has come to the rescue of the most precious tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, and has proved beyond a doubt that St. Peter was certainly at Rome, and that, in A.D. 67, he was martyred there, "inter duas metas" (between the two metae), that is, in the *spina* or middle line of Nero's circus, at an equal distance from the two end goals: in other words, he was executed at the foot of the obelisk which now towers in front of his great church.

After his conversion Constantine erected a memorial chapel—a primitive basilica—upon the spot, working with his own hands at its foundations, and brought thither the body of the great apostle from the oratory of the Via Cornelia, built in A.D. 90 by Anacletus, Bishop of Rome, over the grave where St. Peter was first buried. This basilica grew till it was larger than any mediæval cathedral except Milan and Seville, with which it ranked in size. Every royal pilgrim enriched it with precious gifts. Its quaint façade is depicted for us in Raffaelle's fresco of the "Incendio del Borgo." And so it remained till 1506, when the new church was begun by Julius II. "Men may praise at the present day the magnificence of St. Peter's," says Bishop Creighton; "they forget what was destroyed to make room for it. No more wanton or barbarous act of destruction was ever deliberately committed; no bishop was ever so untrue as was Julius II. to his duty as keeper of the fabric of his church. The church which he strove to raise never met with the reverence which had been paid to the venerable building which he overthrew; it was never to be the great central church of the Germanic peoples."

One has to forget the glories of the old basilica, with its endless historic associations and its splendid monuments, which were a museum of the works of all the great artists till the sixteenth century, before one can admire and love the church which has replaced it: still, after a time, one does admire and love it.

Those who enter Rome now by the railway cannot realise the emotion with which—after the long journey by land or sea—travellers first caught sight of a great dome across the brown and desolate reaches of the Campagna. To those who travelled vetturino from

the north, the sight first came on the hill above Viterbo—a faint blue cupola in the hazy distance nearly sixty miles away, to which, through the whole long day, broken by an impatient rest at Sette Vene, and enlivened by passing the beautiful little blue lake of Vico, and Ronciglione with its fountain and ravine, and by its glimpses of Veii and other Etruscan sites, one drew hourly nearer. But to those who had landed at Civita Vecchia, the monotonous day's journey was drawing to its close, and the scrub of the uncultivated wilderness was turning to crimson and gold in the sunset, before the mighty dome appeared. Nothing could be more impressive than this entrance to Rome. Close upon the walls of the city, close to the gate with its sentinels and custom-house officials, rose the gigantic church, and a sharp turn between shabby buildings brought the travelling-carriage at once in view of its ever-splashing fountains and wide-spreading colonnades, behind which rose the huge mass of the Vatican, the first habitation which met the eye.

Now the poetry of the approach to Rome is extinct for ever, and the poetry of Roman life is almost gone. But all that remains of it lingers around that glorious dome, which becomes such a familiar friend, which is so beautiful and cheerful as it rises above the vast expanse of brown roofs in the limpid morning light, so indescribably magnificent when it is engraved in blue-black solidity upon the flaming evening sky as it is fading through every rainbow hue of violet, crimson, and pink into the most delicate primrose-yellow.

People often describe the dome of St. Peter's as the work of Michelangelo, but it was not. Michelangelo, under Paul III. and Julius III., did make a design for a dome—a poor, heavy, flat, feeble thing. It was Giacomo della Porta who raised this design into the air, and who gave the dome all its present glorious proportions. Meantime, the huge church below went on growing for above two hundred and seventy years, in which it became one of the leading causes of the Reformation, owing to the great sale of Indulgences which was resorted to that funds might be forthcoming for its continuance. All through this time, too, ancient temples and tombs were being stripped of their beautiful marbles and alabasters for its decoration, and shrines of Pagan deities were being turned into shrines of Christian saints. St. Peter's, as we now see it, did more than all the barbaric invasions put together for the destruction of classic Rome, many ancient buildings being levelled even to the ground for the sake only of one or two pieces of marble.

If we are standing at the head of the Trinità steps, on the ridge of the Pincian hill, we look down a line of streets—Condotti, Fontanella Borghese, Tor di Nona—which lead almost directly to St. Peter's. Till a few years ago you emerged from the deep shadows of these streets upon a stately quay, where, perhaps, the finest town-scene in the world burst suddenly upon your gaze. The noble Ponte S. Angelo, in great part dating from the time of Hadrian, crossed the

Tiber by three magnificent arches, with a smaller arch at either end, intended to be available in time of floods, and giving great picturesqueness. In graceful curves, its banks broken here and there by a rocky projection, the noble river swept beneath. In the near foreground the beautiful renaissance Palazzo Altoviti looked down upon the river with its lovely three-arched loggia, and recalled the Violinista, the pale handsome friend of Raffaelle, with the green robe and black cap and the long flowing hair, who is said to have lived in it. Beyond the river, the grand round tower of S. Angelo—the mausoleum of Hadrian—rose from a noble platform of masonry with projecting round towers above a grassy bank, on which also a tall solitary cypress kept watch. And, behind the bridge, above the varied outlines of the Santo Spirito Hospital, with the then lovely wooded slopes of the Janiculan upon the left, rose St. Peter's, in majesty indescribable, in beauty unrivalled.

All is changed now. The Tiber is a mere muddy ditch between two hideous walls of yellow masonry. The tall graceful side arches of the bridge have been made uniform with the others. The Palazzo Altoviti, in spite of its sacred memories, has been levelled with the ground. The outlying fortifications of S. Angelo have been destroyed. The cypress is cut down. The river rocks have been blown up. The woods of the Janiculan have vanished, and a huge hideous black iron suspension-bridge obscures the view of St. Peter's. It is further proposed to pull down the whole block of buildings which forms one side of the main street of the Borgo, or town beyond the river, and which was especially intended to act as a screen to the magnificence of the piazza, and enhance its impression of breadth and sumptuous splendour by the dark narrow way which led to it.

The Piazza Rusticucci—in which Raffaelle died, and where he lay in state beneath his Transfiguration picture—is the opening at the end of the Borgo street. Hence you look across a vast sunlit space, girt in by the two hundred and eighty-four columns of its semicircular colonnades, and with the vast obelisk in its centre which Caligula brought from Heliopolis. At first, after its arrival in Rome, it adorned the circus of Nero, in which the Emperor from his neighbouring gardens used to watch the Christian martyrdoms, and to use the still living bodies of the Christians, covered with pitch and set on fire, as lights for his nightly promenades. It looked down upon the death of St. Peter also, crucified with his head downwards, between the two goals of the imperial playground.

But beyond the long procession of columns, far behind the obelisk, a broad flight of steps, with huge statues of St. Peter and St. Paul at the sides—low steps and easy, broken by vast platforms—leads to the portico of St. Peter's, and high into the sky rises the vast front, with no mark of age upon its face, its yellow travertine looking as if it might have been quarried yesterday. But now it hides the dome. "You pass by the courtiers," says Thackeray, "and up to the steps of

the throne, and the dome seems to disappear behind it. It is as if the throne had upset, and the king toppled over."

On entering the portico, one grieves more than usually over the destruction of the ancient basilica—for the great central door is a relic of it, and most beautiful it is—a picture-book for the people, in its exquisite bronze reliefs of the fifteenth century, one of them representing the martyrdom of St. Peter in the neighbouring circus, another that of St. Paul. Hard by, as in the ancient basilica, is graven the famous epitaph by Charlemagne to Adrian I., who died in 795: "The father of the Church, the ornament of Rome, the blessed Pope." Another door is the Porta Santa, by which the Pope has entered in triumph at the jubilee, every twenty-fifth year from the time of Sixtus IV., and which on all other occasions has been walled up as it is now. But we are only in the portico. "Pause," says Corinne, "before lifting the curtain which hangs before the door of the temple. Does not your heart beat at the approach to this sanctuary? Do you not feel, as you are about to enter, all that can be felt on the eve of a solemn event?"

Yes, pause a moment in the dark entry. Shadows gather under the massive masonry. The curtain is very heavy. A group of peasant women are lifting it together. You pass in with them. In a moment you are in such a vast expanse of glowing light and sumptuous colour as you can never see again in the world. It is, however, not the long lines of aerial perspective, not the many-hued pavement and arches, not the endless statues and pictures, which take possession of you at first and astound you. It is the wonderful climate of the place, the sense of freshness and shelter, an air which is free from all sense of oppression, yet which never alters, so cool in summer, so warm and genial in winter. "The interior of St. Peter's surpasses all powers of description," says Mendelssohn. "It appears like some great wall of nature, a forest, a mass of rocks, or something of the kind; for one can never realise that it is the work of man. You strive to distinguish the ceiling as little as the canopy of heaven. You lose your way in St. Peter's. You take a walk in it, and ramble till you are quite tired. When divine service is performed and chaunted you are not aware of it till you come quite close. The angels in the baptistery are enormous giants, the doves, colossal birds of prey. You lose all sense of measurement with the eye or proportion; and yet who does not feel his heart expand when standing under the dome and gazing up at it?" "Nothing in the world," says Fontana, "can be compared to the interior of St. Peter's. After a year's residence in Rome, I still went with pleasure to spend whole hours there."

But while we are pausing at the threshold, one of the peasant women who entered with us is leading her little son up to the holy-water basin on the left. He cannot reach it, and she lifts him up with difficulty. Then, from the vastness of the holy-water shell, which two huge cupids are holding up, we realise a little the vastness of the whole.

It is a pity, you think sometimes, that all the marble figures in the church, all the well-known minor ornaments, are so enormous. It is that which destroys the sense of proportion. The arches do not look so lofty, the intervening spaces look ten times narrower than they are, because the marble monks are all sons of Anak, and the breezy Veronica in floating draperies, holding aloft her sacred napkin, is such a stupendous giantess. The baldacchino is equally huge, but that does not strike one in the same way : it is part of the general proportions of the church, which the statues, and doves, and wreaths, and palm branches do not need to be. The eye seems to rest upon something more natural to it in the lovely wreath of tiny lamps around the central shrine beneath the dome, and the devotional figures always kneeling against its railing. The lamps are like the sacred fire of Vesta which is never extinguished, and the groups of worshippers replace one another all through the day—for is not this one of the most sacred spots in the world ? It is St. Chrysostom who reminds us that “from this place Peter, from this place Paul, shall be caught up in the resurrection. Oh, consider with trembling that which Rome shall behold, when Paul suddenly rises with Peter from their sepulchre and is carried up into the air to meet the Lord.”

How small the living figures are—moving, sitting, kneeling—below the gigantic statues. They seldom stop to look at Michelangelo's ill-proportioned Pietà ; but there is always a group below the quaint bronze statue of St. Peter, a most unimpressive image to the Protestant mind, though not devoid of a certain uncouth picturesqueness ; yet a letter of Gregory II. remains, in which he says, “Christ is my witness that when I enter the temple of the Prince of the Apostles and contemplate his image, I am filled with such emotion that tears roll down my cheeks like the rain from heaven.”

All around the walls of the church—in gigantic niches—are the huge tombs of the Popes. But they are not of much historic interest. The glorious monuments of the earlier pontiffs were destroyed with the old St. Peter's, except where, in the dimly lit crypt, through which visitors are hurried by a guide, a few precious fragments may be seen, the sarcophagi of the cruel Urban VI., of Innocent VII., Nicholas III., and Julius III., of the English Pope Nicholas Breakspeare, and of the wicked Alexander VI. The noble effigy of the handsome Boniface VIII., immortalised by Dante, and some lovely fragments from the tombs of the handsome Paul II. and others are also to be found here. Only two monuments from the earlier church were replaced in the new basilica—those of the two popes who excited the fury of Savonarola. On the floor of the Chapel of the Sacrament lies the grand bronze figure of Sixtus IV., with whose cordial concurrence the assassination of Lorenzo de' Medici was attempted—a most noble work of Pollajuolo, surrounded by allegorical bas-reliefs, and, high in the left aisle, is another fine work of the same sculptor, in a double representation—living and dead—of the wicked Cibo pope, Innocent VIII.,

whose statue owes its preservation to the fact that its hand holds a representation of the holy lance of Longinus—said to have pierced the side of our Saviour—which was sent to the Pope by the Sultan Bajazet. Great lions, by Canova, adorn the tomb of Clement XIII., but the finest of the later tombs are those which occupy the end of the tribune, by Bernini, of Urban VIII. (Matteo Barberini), with the family bees swarming abundantly over it, and by Guglielmo della Porta, of Paul III. (Alesandro Farnese), on the base of whose throne his mother and sister are represented as Prudence and Truth. The latter of these—who had been mistress of Alexander VI.—was at first depicted entirely naked, but Bernini was afterwards employed to drape her too abundant charms. Du Pays says of both the ladies that they are “Rubens in sculpture.”

At the last arch before leaving the church, English strangers will linger before the monument which George IV. had the grace to put up to the Stuart princes, and on which he, then reigning on their throne, recorded their names as those of James III. of Great Britain and his sons Charles Edward and Henry. Maria Clementina Sobieski, the queen of James III., has a more imposing monument on the opposite side of the aisle.

And now the visitor will diverge to the sacristy with an order to see the glorious vestments it contains, especially the grand brocaded robe called the Dalmatica di San Leone, in which the tribune, Cola di Rienzi, the washerwoman's son, robed himself over his armour, and then ascended to the Vatican as a Caesar—“terribile e fantastico”—with his truncheon in his hand and a crown on his head, and trumpets blowing before him. Lastly, by the long, easy staircases visitors will ascend to the roof, the vast expanse of which is broken by the little houses of the San Pietrini, or workmen of St. Peter's, making quite a village in the air. Hence it is another long ascent into the dome, and ever by a steep staircase into the ball, whither De Brosses recounts that two Spanish monks had ascended, when the earthquake of 1730 surprised them, by which they were so dreadfully terrified that one of them died upon the spot.

In each succeeding visit to St. Peter's, however, it will be increasingly felt that this is not a church which derives its interest from its architectural detail, or, indeed, from its architecture at all. It is rather the heart and soul than the mind which is impressed. The eyes drink in the general sense of overwhelming grandeur, space, and colour, and one does not think of, one does not attend at all to, mere detail or accessories. St. Peter's is always even more felt than seen. One may rebel against its giant statues, its pagan ornaments, its want of devotional inspiration, but the *feeling* of its sumptuous grandeur and splendid beauty will ever remain with one, ever sink deeper into the heart; and to those who remain long in Rome, or revisit it again and again, its dome will become a most familiar friend, will seem almost to acquire an animate place in their lives. Its mar-

vellous curves, its perfect harmony with its surroundings, its natural illuminations and obscurities, come back to them as a gallery of mental pictures of which they never tire. It has a part in all the joys, all the anxieties of Roman life, and it has the power of a comforter in that life's greatest sorrows.

When the Roman season is drawing to a close, and the days are lengthening out, and the Judas trees make a pink veil in the Borghese, and the splash of the fountains is welcome in the hot sunshine, let us go to gather some of the last anemones which linger on the lovely lawn of the Villa Doria. The pines, whose noble umbrella-like masses have been our friends all winter, even the gnarled ilexes with their silver-lined foliage, scarcely attract our attention now, so great is the wealth of tender young green, and of lilac and laburnum and rose blossom. In the hollow garden of the villa itself the camelias are like a little forest ablaze with snowy and crimson bloom. But we cannot look long that way. On the right, the high ground breaks suddenly away in yellow sandstone cliffs, the mountains, softly swelling on either side of the plain and tinted with every shade of verdure in waves of exquisite colour, frame one of those entrancing scenes which can only be found at Rome, where the long flat lines of the Campagna reflect in purest blue the form of every cloud and then pass through all phases of luminous loveliness. They are broken here by the grand lion-like form of Soracte, like a billow of the sea about to break, yet ever motionless, and now rose-pink in the sunset. Then, in the middle distance, close below us, quite free from the town—for the single street which leads to it is hidden by the hollow—rises, stupendous, magnificent, St. Peter's. Its huge dome is in no shadow on this side, but the last gleams of the sunset have turned it into molten gold, on which the architectural lines seem to be engraved in flame colour—every little crack and sinuosity visible in the universal light.

There is nothing of human work in the world so grand—and thus we take leave of it.

AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE.

## THE PISKY PEOPLE

**W**E are the Pisky people,  
With red leaves are we shod:  
We shake the apple blossoms  
Down on the daisied sod,

That silken-soft it may be  
For our enchanted feet;  
We plant the cockles in the corn,  
We fill the honeysuckle's horn;  
Beside the rose we set the thorn,  
The blight amid the wheat.

We are the Pisky people,  
The ancientest of all:  
In tulip-cups we cradle  
Our pisky children small.  
We leave a ring of mushrooms  
To show where we have been,  
'Neath the enchanted moonlight  
Dancing upon the green.

'Tis but the Pisky people  
Who flower and never fade,  
No earthly love can wither  
The bloom of Pisky maid.  
We dance and know not evil,  
We dance and know not good,  
The red leaves falling from the tree  
Are things more steadfast found than we,  
The thistledown is firm to see  
Beside a pixy's mood.

We take no thought of heaven,  
Hell we shall never dree,  
We are as light as foam-bells  
Blown off the Cornish sea.  
Children of wind and water,  
The fixed earth has no part  
In us; our feet are wildfire,  
And wildfire's in our heart.

NORA HOPPER.

## ONE WAY OF LOVE

MRS. DIGBY, who was a rich woman with many of the ways of a poor one, who could have lived in a large house with many servants and yet elected to pass her life in a small villa, with a single old servant, assisted by a young maid—whose life, it may be surmised, was not always an easy one, though it had many gay and by her overlookers unsuspected corners;—Mrs. Digby, who held little direct converse with her neighbours, though their troubles and needs, in accordance with some strange twisted vein of charity within her, never went unsolaced or unhelped, was for all these reasons a source of perennial wonder to all these neighbours, leading to conversation at least as perennial. They had not been happy till they had found an adjective for her; they distrusted anything unclassed, unlabelled. “A bit odd,” was their phrase for her. Being Sussex folk, they would not allow themselves the luxury of an unqualified statement.

To-day, as she looked out, the prospect was dreary. The field in front, rising on its further edge, and baked brown by the summer’s drought, was reaping no apparent benefit from the drenching rain which was falling softly and persistently upon it, now. At best, it was a rough bit of pasture, made up of coarse grass, knapweeds and goats-beards, purple and yellow no longer, just sodden into brown pulp, and the commonest, most starved of common thistles. It was her own field; so were the two beyond on the other side of the railway line. She let them to a farmer, but she regretted his use of them. Immediately under her windows, he had ploughed up an irregular quadrangle, which he had planted with potatoes. Nothing else, as she truly said to him, looks so abjectly wretched in rain; it was certain to rain, as it was doing now in fact, before they could be gathered in. But the farmer was obdurate, any other of his kind would probably prove as bad; she could not or would not cultivate the field herself, so she accepted him and the draggled potato-haulm as disciplinary details, though she did not call them that. She did not belong to any very pronounced school of thought.

That curving bit of railway line, too, was another cause of irritation. She was an old-fashioned woman—not so much so that she denied the convenience of railways in themselves, but she thought that they ought to be concealed, like drains and digestion, and other menial if useful details of Life’s apparatus. The Company had cut through her land, compensating her handsomely; and the crowning touch of annoyance consisted in the fact that the gentle rise, falling away beyond into a graceful curve just visible between the banks, now green and well grown

up, was really not at all ugly. The whole matter had arranged itself so that the grievance was imperceptible. And a grievance with the injury eliminated is always the hardest to bear.

Beyond the fields, the most valuable part of her property spread itself out before her eyes, Haxterd House, standing in its own park lands.

The house was far off, at the other corner of the estate; only in winter, when the oaks were stripped bare, could she catch a glimpse of the grey chimneys. But over the hedge, bounding the triangular field, the one which the railway had cut up most, she could see a stretch of the park land, brown and russet with withered bracken, a charming patch of rough ground, crossed now and then by a drove of fallow-deer. Behind it, a line of oaks, one side of the famous avenue, wound along towards the invisible house; and behind them again the ground sloped gently, till it was crowned by a group of oaks; above and beyond that was the sky.

As she looked at the avenue, over the top of which, as if in anticipation of coming fine weather, the rooks rose and circled slowly, she could fancy herself a little girl again; she could almost see the gleam and flutter of her own white frock under those ancient trees.

The view was not extensive, except for one dip of the land just in front of the sitting-room windows; through that, however, she could see straight away to the South Downs. Not at that moment though; they were blotted out entirely. Clouds wrapt in wet mist swept across the landscape in interminable processions, the wind blew cheerlessly, and a soft damp haze hung about the trees and fields in the distance. The only signs of life were the few dismal sheep walking woodenly one behind the other across the field in a futile search after delectable food, and a flight of fieldfares darting backwards and forwards, now mere black silhouettes against the sky, and then when they turned sharply changed to a flutter of diaphanous brown as the light seemed to sift through their wings. Suddenly, the wind-driven rain drifted across the wet land like clouds of steam, and yet beyond it was a flicker of pale light, as if far away the sun were shining behind the clouds. As she looked, a woman dressed in black passed; her ungloved hand was slipped through her boy's arm. Mrs. Digby watched them. It was, she remembered, the Feast of S. Michael and All Angels, and she had noticed that these two never missed a Saint's Day. She was not so regular herself, but if she did not actually count it to them for righteousness, at any rate she felt that the practice befitted them. Not that she knew them personally, though she thought more constantly of them than of any other people in Haxterd.

She watched them now to the bend of the road, where they turned up to the church and passed finally out of sight. She crossed the room, and leaning on the mantelpiece, she looked down into the fire. It must be three years ago now since the lawyer, Mr. Stitt, had come to her saying that a stranger, a young widow with one son, wanted to

take her cottage. Like the cautious self-seeking person that he was, the lawyer had been careful to take no responsibility for the stranger; he had even spent some pains in tentative belittlement, as people will concerning those who have no apparent *locus standi*, and who might conceivably want a little help, or even sympathy.

Without feeling any particular interest in the matter, beyond a faint but not ill-natured envy of a woman who had been fortunate enough not to lose her son, and satisfaction at letting the house, Mrs. Digby had accepted Mrs. Fellowes as her tenant without asking questions, just brushing aside the lawyer's doubts contemptuously as she was apt to despatch all his remarks and recommendations. She never employed him for the sake of asking or taking his advice, nor for any wisdom she supposed him to possess, for she knew him to have none, but simply as a wheel in the necessary machinery of that law which she could not afford to despise outwardly, since she had nothing else on which she could depend for the execution of her wishes after her death. And she cared very much about them.

Yet when she had known that Mrs. Fellowes was actually arriving, she had not been able to resist the temptation of watching from behind the safe cover of window-curtains wisely disposed. And the aspect of the two strangers—left alone in the midst of a world which as a rule has little time for anything but attention to its own immediate interests—as the boy, apparently about twelve, handed his mother out of the one shaky “fly” of which the village boasted, handed her out, too, in a manner which would not have disgraced Raleigh before his Queen, and yet which had added to that courtliness something of ineffable and inextinguishable affection, touched a chord in Mrs. Digby's heart, and turned her face white with an emotion which she had fancied was dead, so long was it since feelings of that sort had found any place in her everyday life.

And henceforwards those two, whose coming and going were a matter of daily and constant occurrence before her windows, became an integral part of her starved existence: they had come into her life, grey as it was with desolation, like a streak of sunlight which steals suddenly into a room opened after many years. She never called, she never greeted them in the road; any communication between them was conveyed through the mechanical medium of Mr. Stitt. Doubtless Mrs. Digby was “a bit odd,” but so much had crumbled at her touch in times past, or had seemed to her to do so, that she offered Fortune no fresh hostages, she would never risk anything again by going too far: on her unhappiest days she scarcely even allowed herself the pleasure of watching them.

She rang the bell.

“Hannah,” she said, when the only Bit of her old life left appeared, “I want Mr. Stitt; see that he knows it and comes.”

Hannah took a step forward, and stood so that she could see her mistress's face in the light.

"Aren't you well?" she asked, by way of answer.

"I was ill in the night," Mrs. Digby replied as curtly.

"Why didn't you ring?" demanded Hannah, whose harsh ways cloaked a devotion falsely called rare in these days.

"It did not matter, I had all I wanted," said Mrs. Digby; "see that he comes."

And Hannah knew that further expostulation, or even her continued presence, was superfluous. She went downstairs.

"The mistress is bad," she vouchsafed to Elizabeth, who was gay of heart, and found her elders dull.

"She don't look so," was her unfeeling rejoinder.

"Look!" snapped Hannah, "when did you ever see anything even when it was close under your nose? Clean them spoons again."

She crossed the kitchen.

"And she might go off any minute," she murmured to herself, "and lor! whatever should I do then?"

For though as a rule Hannah did not allow herself to think about it, she was in fact almost as lonely as her mistress. However, just now, with her anxiety there mingled a satisfaction because she had caught Elizabeth doing slovenly work, and had obliged her to do it again.

Mrs. Digby went upstairs slowly to her own bedroom. A lane ran along close at the back of her house, and two men, almost under her windows, were talking.

"Oh yes," one was saying, "she's a bit odd, but she's a kind sort o' a 'oman, yer know. Why, when my little Sally was a-layin' there bad with the browntiters——"

And then she heard no more, for they passed on out of earshot. But she knew quite well that she herself was the subject of that conversation. She leaned out of the window and looked. It was Ebenezer Pratt: she knew who had helped the said little Sally. His rough commendation gratified her; it was a case of sincere gratitude, since it had not been said to her nor was it intended for her ears Ebenezer never dreamed of being overheard, though he offered eaves-droppers many advantages.

"A bit odd," she sighed to herself. The general verdict did not reach her then for the first time.

It was one of the days when she felt compelled to destroy things. She turned out and tore up rubbish diligently for an hour or so. Then, the front-door bell rang, and Hannah came up to announce Mr. Hicks. Mrs. Digby hesitated; she did not want Mr. Hicks just then. However, being unfertile in shifts, she admitted that she would be down presently.

She arranged her hair slowly, standing in front of her glass, which reflected a face worn with many trials, wan with fatal disease, and yet marked by a subdued kindness so ingrained that nothing could obliterate it quite. She liked Mr. Hicks, and all the while she

objected to him. First, he was absurdly young to be a vicar, or if he were not he looked so. And then with his round face, and rounder eyes, and crop of thick brown hair he was so ridiculously like the picture of the frightened Puppy in "Alice's Adventures," and then—yes, that was the real reason why she did not care about seeing him to-day—she had never told him in so many words that she meant to leave the greater part of her wealth to the Church, but she had always fancied that he guessed it. His was a wretchedly poor living, though, as he was a man of means, that did not matter to him. Still, her wealth would have made a good perpetual endowment for less fortunate vicars; the parish was wide, scattered, could scarcely be described as given to godliness, and Mr. Hicks loved the Church as her loyal sons should.

And so, now that she had decided to do something quite else with her possessions, she was not so anxious to meet him. However, she went down, though with a demeanour by no means reassuring. She was one of those people who, when they feel themselves in the wrong, always try to throw the onus of it on the injured person; consequently Mr. Hicks, at all times a shy man and sensitive to other people's moods, was more embarrassed than usual. He had an odd peculiarity—he was unable to say his "h's" without a struggle. This failing was not the cockney one, but resultant from some malformation—at least, so Mrs. Digby supposed. When he came to one in the services or out of them, he was accustomed to open his mouth wide, and then, after a vast though silent effort, the luckless aspirate escaped, oddly disjoined however from the rest of the word which should follow.

"—H—ow do you do?" he ejaculated. "I —h—ope you are quite well, but you do not look so," he added.

Mrs. Digby shook hands with him.

"For a young man you are very observant," she said—"no, I am not well, but it does not matter."

"I am very sorry, very sorry indeed," said the vicar, as if he really were, "and you know I am not young."

"You look it," said Mrs. Digby. That was an old battle, and neither had any intention of giving in.

"I am forty; I have told you so before," he said, smiling, "but yours, Mrs. Digby, is a case of 'invincible ignorance,' I am afraid."

She glanced at him. He was more like the Puppy than ever to-day. What business had a man of his age, if he really were forty, with such round surprised eyes?

Hannah came in with the information that Mr. Stitt had called.

"Put him in the dining-room and let him wait," said Mrs. Digby, speaking of him as if he were a parcel. "He comes like a dog you whistle for," she added, not to Mr. Hicks nor to Hannah, but as a general complaint to space. She had nothing of that vulgar contempt which some people feel towards the persons they employ to do their work on the hypothesis that fees without courtesy square any account,

but she had a deep-rooted contempt for Mr. Stitt himself, which was not wholly undeserved, and which betrayed her occasionally into insolence to him.

She turned to Mr. Hicks ; a sudden inspiration moved her to make a confidant of him.

"I have something to tell you," she said. He straightened himself with an unconscious movement, exchanging the attitude of a mere caller for that of a man commissioned to hear.

"I meant to leave most of my money as an endowment for your Church ; did you know it ?"

She blurted the question at him like a shot from a pistol.

"Sometimes I —h—ad fancied that was your intention," he answered.

"Were you glad ?" she demanded, in the same sudden fashion.

"Glad ?" he repeated, and then he paused. He crossed one leg over the other, and laid his hat on a chair close by, clasping his hands round his knees. He looked at her.

"Glad ! yes ; I should —h—ave been very glad for the Church, you know ; it would not —h—ave, could not —h—ave been a personal matter to me."

She waited a moment ; her eyes, and apparently her attention, were fixed on something outside the window. The dun even-hued pall of the earlier morning had gathered itself up into lumpy clouds, dark still, and heavy with rain. Their ragged, angry edge raced along over the Downs, standing out from a background of clear yellow sky just above the hills, which looked so near that it seemed if she put her hand out she would almost be able to touch the windmill on the top.

"I never supposed you wanted it for yourself," she said.

He bowed his head, and waited for the next instalment.

"Do you know Mrs. Fellowes ?" she asked.

"Yes, I know —h—er."

"Do you know anything against her ?" she continued.

"I should not repeat it if I did," Mr. Hicks replied, with more abruptness than the mere absence of "h's" justified. "But I don't," he hastened to add, thus preventing false inferences from his remark. Mrs. Digby looked at him with a long, penetrating stare which he did not enjoy.

"I believe you really do not gossip," she said, when she was satisfied, "and that is odd, considering Haxted and your cloth."

This was a distinct intentional challenge, and he took it as such.

"Don't be unjust," he said, in his soft persuasive way, "and don't flatter me at the expense of men better, many of them, than I am."

His round eyes met hers with dog-like innocence.

"You are dreadfully like that Puppy," she said, and then she stopped ; she had never meant it to escape.

"What puppy ?" he asked.

"It is a funny thing how often I have thought it and not told you, and now it has got out—the Puppy in 'Alice's Adventures,' of course."

He laughed.

"I believe I am," he said, "but it never occurred to me before." He stood up and looked in a mirror, and laughed again to himself. "Well, what are you going to do with your money? for I suppose that was what you were going to tell me."

"I am going to leave it, most of it, to Gerald Fellowes," she answered.

"But you don't know him," said Mr. Hicks before he could check his surprise. Mrs. Digby looked out of the window again, and there was a long pause. When at last she turned round, Mr. Hicks noticed a dimness about her eyes.

"God grant you may never know what loneliness means," she said; "if you do, you will learn to be grateful for things you never think about now. I have watched that boy and his mother for three years, not for nothing neither. Once I had a son myself."

Her last words hardly reached him. He acquiesced in silence. He was not a practical man, that was perhaps the reason why her explanation seemed to him not inadequate. He could not think of anything to say which was not bathos or impertinence, so he wisely said nothing.

"That horrid man Stitt has come," she said, with a change of manner, "to make my will. Can you stay to witness it, and say I was sane if any one makes a fuss? Not that there is any one."

"I will do anything you wish," he said. From the depths of his heart he was grieved for this odd, inconsistent, and much-tried woman. She rang the bell for Hannah.

"Show that man in," she said. "I should not have him if there were any one else," she explained to Mr. Hicks.

When Mr. Stitt appeared, Mr. Hicks admitted to himself that there was ample ground for Mrs. Digby's attitude—he felt similarly himself. The lawyer was a spare dark young man, with an unpleasantly keen face and small eyes set much too close together. The vicar, as he watched, felt, not for the first time, that Mr. Stitt would never lose a penny for a scruple. The lawyer bowed to Mrs. Digby as to a woman of large means, even if she had odd ways of using them, and then less deferentially to Mr. Hicks, whom he did not like. He thought, too, that the Church and its appurtenances were items with which the world could dispense. He rested his bag upon the table and waited. Mrs. Digby went to a writing-table and took up a paper, which she unfolded.

"This is my old will, I am going to make another, please to write it out." She tore it across as she spoke. "My dear madam"—Mr. Stitt began, but her face stopped him abruptly. She was not in the habit of being the dear madam of his kind.

"Certainly," he said, "if you will give me directions, I will have it drawn up, and—when shall I bring it to you for final arrangements and your signature?"

"That won't do at all; you must write it now, and you and Mr. Hicks will witness it."

"But, but—why this undue haste?"

"No haste is undue; I may die to-night or before, and anyhow I mean to have it done."

She glared at him.

"There are pen and ink at that bureau."

Mr. Stitt dropped into a chair, undid his bag, and took up a pen from the tray, which he tried upon his thumb-nail. He spread out a sheet of paper, and turning half round towards her awaited instructions. "There are to be no unnecessary words and mystifications," said Mrs. Digby, "but just a straightforward will which is legal."

She stopped and looked at him. Her deep-set eyes were wide open, and there was a weird light in them as she watched him.

"If you play me tricks I will haunt you," she said, quite quietly.

The commonplace man stared, but he was awed. She really seemed to think she could at will. He shivered, which amused and pleased her.

Mr. Hicks, seeing it all, was impressed again with the tragedy of this woman's life: it had left her so odd, seemingly hard; so miserable, and withal so kindly underneath it all. It seemed like waste, and yet he had never believed in the possibility of that.

She handed Mr. Stitt a piece of her first will.

"You can copy that bit about Hannah. She is to have this house, the furniture, and the annuity."

There was silence except for the lawyer's pen.

At last he looked up.

"So far so good," he said. "What next?"

Mrs. Digby looked across at Mr. Hicks.

"I should like to leave the Church something," she said.

"Well, give us a lectern," he suggested. "We can put your name on that, and always remember you when we read from it."

"Nonsense. I don't want my name put on anything, and there is nothing about me worth remembering."

"Don't say that," he remarked; but she paid no attention to him. She turned to Mr. Stitt.

"I leave the churchwardens of S. Silas' Haxted £100 for a lectern and £100 a year for the living—of that Great Northern Stock." She chuckled. "I got that out of this company for spoiling my land, so I invested it in a better railway than theirs. You cannot witness the will if I leave the money to you," she said to Mr. Hicks, "but you must choose the lectern. Snub the churchwardens."

There was another interval of scratching, and Mr. Stitt waited.

"The rest of my property, including Haxted House, I leave to Gerald Fellowes; that is, to Mrs. Fellowes until he is twenty-one, and then the whole of it to him, except £200 a year, which he is to pay to

his mother." She watched Mr. Stitt carefully as she spoke. He twisted himself round on his chair.

"But—Mrs. Fellowes may be an adventuress for all any one of us knows," he exclaimed.

Before Mrs. Digby could answer, the vicar's wrath had burst its bounds.

"Sir!" he said, "are you aware of whom you are speaking?"

Mr. Stitt returned his glare. He was aware at any rate of the village gossip, aware too that the vicar was eligible. He himself was the usual conduit of such nastiness.

"Quite," he replied, with an insolent look which conveyed his meaning plainly to any man so sensitive as the vicar.

But Mrs. Digby prevented Mr. Hicks from hot indiscretion.

"Mr. Stitt, I asked you to come here to do my business, and not to make impertinent remarks about a woman of whom you might know a great deal of good if you had the sense to know good when you see it."

She leaned back in her chair. Anger tired her. She was surprised, too, to find how much these strangers had come to mean to her. She had always been a partisan, only she had been for so long without any one to champion.

"You can add that the property of which Hannah is to have the life use goes to Gerald on her death."

She lingered a little over his name; it was pleasant to use a boy's name again.

"Mrs. Fellowes is sole executrix," she said, as an afterthought. All Mr. Stitt's ill-temper, which he could not express otherwise, escaped scratchily from the end of his pen. At last he had finished, and held the will out to Mrs. Digby. She took the fragments of the old one and threw them into the fire. Then she read the new one slowly. She handed it to Mr. Hicks.

"Do you think that is all right?" she asked. It was her way of punishing Mr. Stitt's impertinence. Mr. Hicks read it and handed it back.

"It looks quite legal," he said, "but I am not a business man."

Mrs. Digby signed it with the two men as witnesses. She folded it and gave it to Mr. Hicks.

"When I am dead, take it to Mrs. Fellowes; it will be quite safe with you."

That was the remainder of Mr. Stitt's chastisement.

After they had both left her, Mrs. Digby went up to her room again, and sat down by the window. She had a better view from there than she could get from the drawing-room. She looked across the park towards the house in which she had never lived since her son's death had completed what her husband's had begun. She had let it instead, and had invested the proceeds steadily, till the estate was not only not encumbered, but was administered to perfection, and there

was a satisfactory amount of railway and other stock standing in her name. She had gone on saving for some object that in her dullest days of despair she had somehow felt would come. For a long time it had been the endowment of the Church, but she had taken no very keen interest in that, though she had tried. In her isolation she had asked for something more immediately and apparently human than that. And there it was, this desired object, just before her in the persons of Gerald and his mother, strolling past the house. As usual, Mrs. Fellowes had the arm of the tall boy, who was growing up to equal her in height. He was talking eagerly, and the light fell full on his face. He was not handsome, but to Mrs. Digby's fancy he resembled the portrait which stood always on her dressing-table. It was a likeness which no one else would have seen, a likeness born of desire, but it pleased her. The two passed on to their cottage, and he opened the door for his mother.

Mrs. Digby could catch glimpses of them still as they moved about their sitting-room, and, for once, she felt that she might legitimately watch them there; not because she had just done what she had—no sordid notion of that kind so much as entered her head—but because just then she was so grateful to them for all they had been, still were, to her.

For a moment she hesitated. Should she break through her custom, and go across and call on them? It would be so consoling once again to meet a friendly child; the mother, too, she would like once to speak to her. But something, the crusted habit of years, held her back, and she sat down again.

What use would he make of it when she was dead and forgotten? All the possibilities of a young man's life, endowed with golden opportunities, opened before her. What would he do with it? How would he serve his country, use his life? What a different one lay before him now to that which he expected, counting as he must do only on his mother's obviously straitened means. And ah! how widely different from hers, hers now with the useless use of all this wealth, hers dropping so irrevocably into the place where all things are dim and forgotten.

She pictured him as a soldier coming back to his mother with the decorations of success—on the wall above her hung medals won before the fatal field had claimed her own son. Then she fancied him on his wedding day with all life stretched shinily before him, then as a successful statesman, or again just as squire and sportsman among his quiet neighbours. How well she could see that, the park—her park—in all the first freshness of day, with the light silvering the oak leaves, and the dew spangling the grass, the untouched cleanliness of it all, the air unpolluted by the least impure thing. Great floods of light would pour down upon the bracken through the spaces between the oaks: far away, the deer like dim shadows would fleet across the open spaces, scarcely touching earth. Her park—hers no longer,

would anything be hers then? no, his park; how would he use it all, this wealth?—which was not his yet, not *yet*, for such a tiny breathing space, just those few struggling hours wherein an old woman should finish her course.

In these dreaming moments she followed him through all the ramifications of possibility; she pictured life at its dawn seizing every opportunity from hers which had failed so signally. The contrast filled her with a poignant melancholy. But no, she refused to go back upon that. Resolutely, she drove it away into her mind's background.

How would Gerald take it? How would he feel towards her? And then, what would his mother feel? Would they ever realise, either of them, how much they had meant to her? Perhaps Mr. Hicks would tell them that. Unfortunately as he resembled that Puppy in the face, she fancied that he understood more than might have been expected. Out of the blank desolation of her life, there would come happiness for Gerald, even to her some taste of that in the anticipation. Life had been very very grey, very dreary, all that and more, but there was surely some faint promise of light at evening time, steady light, eclipsed it might be at the moment of her actual passing, perhaps not, anyhow breaking again into the full light of dawn. After all, that was the perfect order, the radiance of youth springing from the worn-out hulk; it was Nature's way, the right way, if a little chastening to the source of so much brilliancy. Would they know, too, that they really owed her nothing, what they gave, what she gave, being both in the region of non-material things really, the tangible possession chancing to be a mere channel for something which could never be handled nor appraised, so that there could be no debt at all? A proud woman herself, she had no desire to lay others under unfair obligations.

Would they accept it—as she had accepted their gift? Would they have a little extra joy, and through her? Would there at last come an end to woe? Surely yes to it all!

And so, dreaming, she fell asleep, passing quietly unconsciously on to the time, so close at hand now, when Mr. Hicks would have to carry out her last behest.

GERALDINE HODGSON.

## THE POET RAFTERY

## I

ONE afternoon of last winter I sat by the fire in a ward of Gort Workhouse, and listened to two old women as they argued as to the merits of two rival poets they had seen and heard in their childhood, Raftery and Callinan.

One old woman, who was from Kilchreest, said :—"Raftery hadn't a stim of sight, and he travelled the whole nation, and he was the best poet that ever was, and the best fiddler. It was always at my father's house, opposite the big tree, that he used to stop when he was in Kilchreest. I often saw him, but I didn't take much notice of him then, being a child ; it was after that I used to hear so much about him. Though he was blind, he could serve himself with his knife and fork as well as any man with his sight. I remember the way he used to cut the meat, across like this. Callinan was nothing to him."

The other old woman, who was from Craughwell, said :—"Callinan was a great deal better than him, and he could make songs in English as well as in Irish ; Raftery would run from where Callinan was. And he was a nice respectable man too, with cows and sheep, and a kind man. *He* would never put anything that wasn't nice into a poem, and *he* would never run any one down, but if you were the worst in the world, he'd make you the best in it ; and when his wife lost her beetle, he made a song of fifteen verses about it."

"Well," the Kilchreest old woman admitted, "Raftery would run people down ; he was someway bitter, and if he had anything against a person, he'd give him a great lacerating. But there were more for him than for Callinan ; some used to say that Callinan's songs were too long."

"I tell you," said the other, "Callinan was a nice man and a nice neighbour. Raftery wasn't fit to put beside him. Callinan was a man that would go out of his own back door and make a poem about the four quarters of the earth. I tell you, you would stand in the snow to listen to Callinan !" But just then a bedridden old woman suddenly sat up and began to sing Raftery's "Bridgit Vesach," as long as her breath lasted ; so the last word was for him after all.

Callinan's fame is but local, but Raftery's songs are known, if not as our people say "all over the world," at least in all places where Irish is spoken. Blind and a wanderer, he carried on until his death, between sixty and seventy years ago, the tradition of the old bards. There are many who still remember his biting satires, one of which "withered up a bush," his exultant competitions with other poets,

his praises of beauty and of his friends. There are many in Galway and in Mayo who have got their knowledge of Irish history, forbidden in the schools, from his songs, historical, political, and religious; for in Ireland, history, politics, and religion grow on one stem, an eternal trefoil.

It is not easy to judge of the quality of Raftery's poems. Some of them have probably been lost altogether; some are written out in copy-books by peasants who had kept them in their memory, but, some of these books have been destroyed, and some have been taken to America by emigrants. It is said that when he was on his death-bed he was very sorry that his songs had not all been taken down, and that he dictated one he had just made to a young man who unhappily had not complete mastery of the Irish character, and could not read what he had written down, "and that vexed him, and then a man came in and he asked him to take down all his songs, and he could have them for himself; but he said 'If I did, I'd always be called Raftery,' and he went out again." Dr. Hyde has published one of his love songs, and is bringing out two or three of his others in his "Religious Songs of Connaught" with a translation.

I hear the people say now and then, "If Raftery had had education he would have been the greatest poet in the world," but I am sometimes sorry that his education went as far as it did. An old neighbour tells me "he used to carry a book about with him, a Pantheon, all about the heathen gods and goddesses, and whoever he'd get that was able to read, he'd get him to read it to him, and then he'd keep them in his mind, and use them as he wanted them." And another neighbour says:—"He used to stop with my uncle that was a hedge schoolmaster in those times at Ballylee, and that was very fond of drink, and when he was drunk he'd take his clothes off and run naked through the country. But at evening he'd open the school, and the neighbours that would be working all day would gather in to him, and he'd teach them through the night, and there Raftery would be in the middle of them."

His chief historical poem is the "Talk with the Bush" of over a hundred lines. Many of the people can repeat it, or a part of it, and some possess it written out. The bush, a forerunner of the Talking Oak or the Father of the Forest, gives its recollections, which go back to the time of the Firbolgs, the Tuatha de Danaan, the Milesians, the heroic Fenians "who would never put more than one man to fight against one," till at last it comes to "O'Rourke's wife that brought a blow to Ireland," for it was on her account the English were first called in. Then come the crimes of the English, made redder by the crime of Martin Luther. Henry VIII. "turned his back on God and denied his first wife"; Elizabeth "routed the bishops and the Irish Church"; James was "the worst man for habits," yet "the father wasn't worse than the son Charles, who laid sharp scourges on Ireland. When God and the people thought it was time the story to be

done, he lost his head. Then Cromwell and his hosts swept through Ireland, cutting before him all he could. He gave estates and lands to Cromwellians and he put those that had a right to them on mountains." . . . "James, sharp blame to him, gave his daughter to William to wife, made the Irish English, and the English Irish, like wheat and oats mixed together, till at Aughrim on a Monday many of the sons of Ireland got sorrow, without speaking of all that died." Whenever he brings history into his poems the same strings are touched. "At the great judgment Cromwell will be hiding, and O'Neill in the corner. And I think if William can manage it at all he won't stand his ground against Sarsfield." And a moral often comes at the end such as "Don't be without courage, but join together; God is stronger than the Cromwellians, and the cards may turn yet."

## II

Raftery had lived through the '98 rebellion, and the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, and he saw the Tithe War and the Repeal movement, and it is natural that his poems, like those of the bards of Spenser's time, should reflect the desire of his people for "the mayntenance of their own lewde libertye." Here are some verses from his "Cuis da ple," "Cause to plead," composed at the time of the Tithe War :—<sup>1</sup>

"I heard a little story now lately from the golden plover of the mountain that was in Duchill, that there will be a Repealer and his strong forces, and the help of God steering him, and this lot of English speakers left without wine, without feast, and showers of bullets routing them. . . .

"Were I laid low under shredded tobacco and under white unquenched light, if only I should here tell of the tribe that tortured me, I should rise up strong against them. I hope in my Master that I shall not go under the green sod till I see the crew without power, and till I shall be counting them drowned in pools and lying quiet under high rocks; left in bruised heaps by showers of bullets and sharp pikes, a stone and a branch in each man's hand, and the curse of God on the crew.

"The two provinces of Munster are afoot, and will not stop till tithes are overthrown and rents accordingly, and if help were given them, and we to stand by Ireland, the English guard would be feeble and every gap made easy. The Galls (English) will be on their back without ever returning again, and the Orangemen bruised in the borders of every town, a judge and jury in the courthouse for the Catholics; England dead, and the crown upon the Gael. . . .

"There is many a fine man at this time sentenced, from Cork to Ennis and the town of Roscrea, and fair-haired boys wandering and departing from the streets of Kilkenny to Bantry Bay. But the cards will turn and we'll have a good hand, the trump shall stand on the board we play at. . . Let ye have courage, it is a fine story I have, ye shall gain the day in every

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<sup>1</sup> I have taken Dr. Hyde's translation of this and some of the other poems. Some I have been helped in translating by country neighbours, who still speak their native Irish, as well as Elizabethan English.

quarter from the Sassanach, strike ye the board and the cards will be coming to you. Drink out of hand now a health to Raftery, it is he would put success for you on the '*Cuis da ple?*'"

This is part of another song :—

"I have a hope in Christ that a gap will be opened again for us. . . . The day is not far off, the Galls will be stretched without any one to cry after them, but with us there will be a bonfire lighting up on high. . . . The music of the world entirely, and Orpheus playing along with it, I'd sooner than all that, the Sassanach to be put down."

But with all this, he had a strong vein of common sense, and an old man at Ballylee tells me that, "One time there were a sort of night-walkers, Moonlighters as we'd call them now, Ribbonmen they were then, making some plan against the Government, and they asked Raftery to come to their meeting. And he went, but what he said was this, in a verse, that they should look at the English Government and think of all the soldiers it had, and all the police—no, there were no police in those days but gaugers and such like—and they should think how full up England was of guns and arms, so that it could put down Buonaparty; and that it had conquered Spain and took Gibraltar from it, and the same in America, fighting for twenty-one years. And he asked them what they had to fight with against all those guns and arms—nothing but a stump of a stick that they might cut down below in the wood. So he bid them give up their night-walking, and come out and agitate in the daylight."

If he had been born a few decades later, he would have been caught, like other poets of the time, in the formulas of English verse. As it was, both his love poems and his religious poems were caught in the formulas imported from Greece and from Rome, and any formula must make a veil between the prophet who has been on the mountain top, and the people who are waiting at its foot for his message. The dreams of woman's beauty that formed themselves in the mind of the blind poet become flat and vapid when, in the effort to give them the highest expression, he embodies them in the well-worn names of Helen and of Venus. The truths of God that he strove in his last years to "have written in the book of the people" left those unkindled whose ears were already wearied with the well-known words "the keys of Heaven—penance, fasts, and alms," to whom it was an old tale to hear of hell as a furnace, and the grave as a dish for worms. When he gets away from the formulas he has often a fine line on death or on judgment: the cheeks of the dead are "cold as the snow that is at the back of the sun;" the careless, those who "go out looking at their sheep on Sunday instead of going to Mass," are warned that "on the side of the hill of the tears, there will be ohone!"

His love songs are many, and they sometimes brought good luck, for I am told of a girl "that was not handsome at all, but ugly, that he made a song about, for her civility, for she used to be in a house where he used to lodge, and the song got her a husband, and there is

a son of hers living now down in Clare-Galway." And an old woman tells me, with a sigh of regret for what might have been, that she saw Raftery one time at a dance, and he spoke to her and said, "'Well planed you are, the carpenter that planed you knew his trade.' And I said, 'Better than you know yours,' for there were two or three of the strings of his fiddle broke. And then he said something about O'Meara that lived near us, and my father got vexed at what he said and would let him speak no more with me. And if it wasn't for him speaking about O'Meara and my father getting vexed, he might have made words about me like he did for Mary Hynes and for Mary Brown."

"Bridgit Vesach," which I have heard in many cottages as well as from the old woman in Gort Workhouse, begins:—

"I would wed courteous Bridgit without coat, shoe, or shirt. Treasure of my heart, if it were possible for me I would fast for you nine meals, without food, without drink, without any share of anything, on an island of Lough Erne with desire for you and me to be together till we should settle our case. . . . My heart started with trouble and I was frightened nine times that morning that I heard that you were not to be found. . . . I would sooner be stretched by you with nothing under us but heather and rushes than be listening to the cuckoos that are stirring at the break of day. . . . I am in grief and in sorrow since you slipped from me across the mearing."

Another love poem, "Mairin Stanton," is an example of his habit of mixing comparisons drawn from the classics with those drawn from nature:—

"There's a bright flower by the side of the road, and she beats Deirdre in the beauty of her voice; or I might say Helen, Queen of the Greeks, she for whose sake hundreds died at Troy.

"There is light and brightness in her as in those others; her little mouth is as sweet as the cuckoo on the branch. You would not find a mind like hers in any woman, since the pearl died that was in Ballylee.

"To see under the sky a woman settled like her, walking on the road on a fine sunny day, the light flashing from the whiteness of her breast, would give sight to a man without eyes.

"There is the love of hundreds in her face, and there is the promise of the evening star; if she had been living in the time of the gods it is not Venus that would have had the apple.

"Her hair falls down below her knees, waving and winding to the mouth of her shoe; her locks spread out wide and pale like dew, they leave a brightness on the road behind her.

"She is the girl that has been taught the nicest of all whose eyes still open to the sun; and if the estate of Lord Lucan belonged to me, on the strength of my cause this jewel would be mine.

"Her slender lime white shape, her face like flowers, her neck, her cheek, and her amber hair; Virgil, Cicero, and Homer could tell of nothing like her; she is like the dew in the time of harvest.

"If you could see this plant moving or dancing you could not but love the flower of the branch; if I cannot get a hundred words with Mairin Stanton I do not think my life will last long.

"She said 'Good morrow' early and pleasantly, she drank my health and gave me a stool, and it not in the corner. At the time that I am ready to go on my way, I will stay talking and talking with her."

The "pearl that was at Ballylee" was Mary Hynes, a poor girl with a sorrowful history. His song on her is very popular, "a great song, so that her name is sung through the three parishes." She must have been beautiful, for many who knew her still speak of her beauty, of her long shining hair, and the "little blushes in her cheeks." And an old woman says, "I never can think of her but I'll get a trembling, she was so nice; and if she was to begin talking, she'd keep you laughing till daybreak." But others say "it was the poet that made her so handsome," or, "whatever she was, he made twice as much of it." I give one or two verses of the song:—

"There was no part of Ireland I did not travel, from the rivers to the tops of the mountains, to the edge of Lough Greine whose mouth is hidden, but I saw no beauty but was behind hers.

"Her hair was shining and her brows were shining too ; her face was like herself, her mouth pleasant and sweet. She is the pride, and I give her the branch, she is the shining flower of Ballylee."

Even many miles from Ballylee, if the "poseen geala" the "shining flower" is spoken of, it is always known that it is Mary Hynes that is meant.

### III

Raftery is said to have spent the last seven years of his life praying and making religious songs, because Death had told him in a vision that he had only seven years to live. His own account of the vision has been given to me by the man at whose house he died. "I heard him telling my father that one time he was sick in Galway, and there was a mug beside the bed, and in the night he heard a noise, and he thought it was the cat was on the table, and that she'd upset the mug, and he put his hand out, and what he felt was the bones and the thinness of Death. And his sight came to him, and he saw where his wrapper was hanging on the wall. And Death said he had come to bring him away, or else one of the neighbours that lived in such a house. And after they talked a while, he said he would give him a certain time before he'd come for him again, and he went away. And in the morning when his wife came in, he asked where did she hang his wrapper the night before, and she told him it was in such a place, and that was the very place he saw it, so he knew that he had had his sight. And then he sent to the house that had been spoken of to know how was the man of it, and word came back that he was dead. I remember when he was dying, a friend of his, one Cooney, came in to see him, and said, 'Well, Raftery, the time is not up yet that Death gave you to live.' And he said, 'The Church and myself have it made out that it was not Death that was there, but the devil that came to tempt me.'"

His description of Death in his poem on the "Vision" is vivid and unconventional :—

" I had a vision in my sleep last night, between sleeping and waking ; a figure standing beside me, thin, miserable, sad, and sorrowful ; the shadow of night upon his face, the tracks of the tears down his cheeks. His ribs were bending like the bottom of a riddle, his nose thin, that it would go through a cambric needle ; his shoulders hard and sharp, that they would cut tobacco ; his head dark and bushy like the top of a hill ; and there is nothing I can liken his fingers to. His poor bones without any kind of covering ; a withered rod in his hand, and he looking in my face. It is not worth my while to be talking about him ; I questioned him in the name of God."

A long conversation follows ; Raftery addresses him, " Whatever harbour you came from last night, move up to me and speak if you can." Death answers, " Put away Hebrew, Greek and Latin, French, and the three sorts of English, and I will speak to you sweetly in Irish, the language that you found your verses in. I am Death that has hidden hundreds ; Hannibal, Pompey, Julius Cæsar ; I was in the way with Queen Helen. I made Hector fall that conquered the Greeks, and Conchobar that was king of Ireland ; Cuchulain and Goll, Oscar and Diarmuid, and Usheen that lived after the Fenians, and the children of Usna that brought away Deirdre from Conor ; at a touch from me they all fell." But Raftery answers, " O high Prince, without height, without followers, without dwelling, without strength, without hands, without force, without state ; all in the world wouldn't make me believe it, that you'd be able to put down the half of them." But Death speaks solemnly to him then, and warns him that " life is not a thing that you get a lease of, there will be stones and a sod over you yet. Your ears that were so quick to hear everything will be closed, deaf, without sound, without hearing ; your tongue that was so sweet to make verses, will be without a word in the same way. . . . Whatever store of money or wealth you have, and the greatcoat up about your ears, Death will snap you away from the middle of it." And the poem ends at last with an account of the Passion and a prayer for mercy.

He was always ready to confess his sins with the passionate exaggeration of St. Paul or of Bunyan. In the "Talk with the Bush," when he professes to have thought there was a new flood coming, he says :—" I was thinking, and no blame to me, that my lease of life wouldn't be long, and that it was bad work my hands had left after them ; to be committing sins since I was a child, swearing big oaths and blaspheming. I never think to go to Mass. Confession at Christmas I wouldn't ask to go to. I would laugh at my neighbour's downfall, and I'd make nothing of breaking the ten commandments. Gambling and drinking and all sorts of pleasures that would come across me, I'd have my hand in them." The poem known as his "Repentance" is in the same strain. It is said to have been composed "one time he went to confession to Father Bartley Kilkelly,

and he refused him absolution because he was too much after women and drink. And that night he made up his 'Repentance,' and the next day he went again, and Father Pat Burke, the curate, was with Father Bartley, and he said, 'Well, Raftery, what have you composed of late?' and he said, 'This is what I composed,' and he said the 'Repentance.' And then Father Bartley said to the curate, 'You may give him absolution, where he has his repentance made before the world.'"

It begins :—

"O King who art in heaven . . . I scream to Thee again and aloud, for it is Thy grace I am hoping for.

"I am in age, and my form is withered, many a day I have been going astray. . . . When I was young my deeds were evil, I delighted greatly in quarrels and rows. I liked much better to be playing or drinking on a Sunday morning than to be going to Mass. . . . I was given to great oaths and I did not let lust and drunkenness pass me by. . . . The day has stolen away and I have not raised the hedge until the crop in which thou didst take delight is destroyed. . . . I am a worthless stake in a corner of a hedge, or I am like a boat that has lost its rudder, that would be broken against a rock in the sea, and that would be drowned in the cold waves."

But in spite of this self-denunciation, people who knew him say there was no harm in him, though it is added, "but as for a drop of drink, he was fond of that to the end." And in another mood, in his "Argument with Whisky," he claims as an excuse for that weakness the desire for companionship felt by a wanderer—"and the world knows it's not for love of what I drink, but for love of the people that do be near me." And he has always a confident belief in final absolution :—"I pray to you to hear me, O Son of God; as you created the moon, the sun, the stars, it is no task or trouble for you to ready me."

There are some fine verses in a poem made at the time of a visitation of cholera :—

"Look at him who was yesterday swift and strong, who would leap stone wall, ditch, and gap, who was in the evening walking the street, and is going under the clay on the morrow.

"Death is quicker than the wave of drowning or than any horse however fast on the race-course. He would strike a goal against the crowd, and no sooner is he there than he is on guard before us.

"He is changing, hindering, rushing, starting, unloosed ; the day is no better to him than the night ; when a person thinks that there is no fear of him, there he is on the spot laid low with keening.

"Death is a robber who heaps together kings, high princes, and country lords ; he brings with him the great, the young, and the wise, gripping them by the throat before all the people.

"It is a pity for him who is tempted with the temptations of the world, and the store that will go with him is so weak, and his lease of life no better if he were to live for a thousand years, than just as if he had slipped over on a visit and back again. . . .

"When you are going to lie down, don't be dumb. Bare your knee and bruise the ground. Think of all the deeds that you put by you, and that you are travelling towards the meadow of the dead."

Some of his poems of places, usually in his birthplace, Mayo, the only ones he had ever looked on, for small-pox took his sight away in his childhood, have much charm. "Cnocan Sevar," "the Sharp-edged Little Hill," must have sounded like a dream of Tir-nan-og to many a poor farmer in his sodden-thatched cottage :—

"After the Christmas, with the help of Christ, I will never stop if I am alive, I will go to the sharp-edged little hill, for it is a fine place without fog falling, a blessed place that the sun shines on, and the wind doesn't rise there or any thing of the sort.

"And if you were a year there you would get no rest, only sitting up at night and eternally drinking.

"The lamb and the sheep are there, the cow and the calf are there, fine lands are there without heath and without bog. Ploughing and seed sowing in the right month, and plough and harrow prepared and ready ; the rent that is called for there, they have means to pay it. There is oats and flax and large-eared barley . . . There are beautiful valleys with good growth in them and hay. Rods grow there, and bushes and tufts, white fields are there and respect for trees, shade and shelter from wind and rain ; priests and friars reading their book ; spending and getting is there, and nothing scarce."

In another song in the same manner, on "Cilleaden," he says : "I leave it in my will that my heart rises as the wind rises or as the fog scatters, when I think upon Carra and the two towns below it, on the two mile bush and on the plains of Mayo. . . And if I were standing in the middle of my people, age would go from me, and I would be young again."

He writes of friends that he has found in Galway as well as in Mayo, a weaver, a carpenter, a priest at Kilcolgan who is "the good Christian, the clean wheat of the Gael, the generous messenger, the standing tree of the clergy." Some of his eulogies both on persons and places are somewhat spoiled by grotesque exaggeration. Even Cilleaden has not only all sorts of native fishes "as plenty as turf," and all sorts of native trees, but is endowed with "tortoises," with "logwood and mahogany." His country weaver must not only have frieze and linen in his loom, but satin and cambric. A carpenter near Ardrahan, Shawn Conroy, is praised with more simplicity for his "quick, lucky work" and for the pleasure he takes in it. "I never met his master ; the trade was in his nature," and he gives a long list of all the things he could make, "doors and all that would be wanted for a big house," mills and ploughs and spinning wheels "nicely finished with a clean chisel" ; "all sorts of things for the living, and a coffin for the dead." And with all this "he cares little for money, but to spend, as he earns, decently. And if he was up for nine nights, you wouldn't see the sign of a drop on him."

Another of his more simple poems is what Spenser would call an "elegie, or friend's passion" on Thomas O'Daly, a player on fiddle or pipes, that gives him a touch of kinship with the poets who have mourned their Astrophel, their Lycidas, their Adonais, their Thyrsis.

This is how I have been helped to put it into English by a young working farmer, sitting by a turf fire one evening, when his day in the fields was over :—

"It was Thomas O'Daly that roused up young people and scattered them, and since death played on him, may God give him grace. The country is all sorrowful, always talking, since their man of sport died that would win the goal in all parts with his music.

"The swans on the water are nine times blacker than a blackberry since the man died from us that had pleasantness on the top of his fingers. His two grey eyes were like the dew of the morning that lies on the grass. And since he was laid in the grave, the cold is getting the upper hand.

"If you travel the five provinces you would not find his equal for countenance or behaviour, for his equal never walked on land or grass. High King of Nature, you who have all powers in yourself, he that wasn't narrow-hearted, give him shelter in heaven for it.

"He was the beautiful branch. In every quarter that he ever knew he would scatter his fill and not gather. He would spend the estate of the Dalys, their beer and their wine. And that he may be sitting in the chair of grace, in the middle of Paradise.

"A sorrowful story on death, it's he is the ugly chief that did treachery, that didn't give him credit, O strong God, for a little time.

"There are young women, and not without reason, sorry and heart-broken and withered, since he was left at the church. Their hair thrown down and hanging, turned grey on their head.

"No flower in any garden, and the leaves of the trees have leave to cry, and they falling on the ground. There is no green flower on the tops of the tufts, since there did a boarded coffin go on Daly.

"There is sorrow on the men of mirth, a clouding over the day, and no trout swim in the river. Orpheus on the harp, he lifted up every one out of their habits, and he that stole what Argus was watching the time he took away Io ; Apollo, as we read, gave them teaching, and Daly was better than all these musicians.

"A hundred wouldn't be able to put together his actions and his deeds and his many good works. And Raftery says this much for Daly, because he liked him."

Though his praises are usually all for the poor, for the people, he has left one beautiful lament for a landowner :—

"There is no dew or grass on Cluan Lahan. The cuckoo is not to be seen on the furze, the leaves are withering, and the trees complaining of the cold. There is no sun or moon in the air or in the sky, or no light in the stars coming down, with the stretching of O'Kelly in the grave. . . .

"My grief to tell it ! he to be laid low ; the man that did not bring grief or trouble on any heart, that would give help to those that were down. . . .

"No light on the day like there was ; the fruits not growing, no children on the breast, there's no return in the grain, the plants don't blossom as they used since O'Kelly with the fair hair went away, he that used to forgive us a great share of the rent.

"Since the children of Usna and Deirdre went to the grave, and Cuchullain who, as the stories tell, would gain victory in every step he

would take ; since he died, such a story never came of sorrow or defeat, since the Gaels were sold at Aughrim, and since Owen Roe died, the branch."

## IV

Raftery's life was always the wandering homeless life of the old bards. After Cromwell's time, as the houses they went to grew poorer, they had added music to their verse-making, and Raftery's little fiddle helped to make him welcome in the Ireland which was, in spite of many sorrows, as merry and light-hearted up to the time of the great famine as England had been up to the time of the Puritans. "He had no place of his own," I am told, "but to be walking the country. He did well to die before the bad years came. He used to play at Kiltartan Cross for the dancing of a Sunday evening. And when he'd come to any place the people would gather, and he'd give them a dance, for there was three times as many people in the world then as what there is now. The people would never have let him want, but as to money, what could he do with it, and he with no place of his own." An old woman near Craughwell says, "He used to come here often, it was like home to him. We wouldn't have a dance then, my father liked better to be sitting listening to his talk and his stories; only when we'd come in he'd take the fiddle and say, 'Now we must give the youngsters a tune.'" And a very old man, who is still lamenting the fall in prices after the battle of Waterloo, remembers having seen him "one time at a sheebeen house that used to be down there in Cloonerle. He was playing the fiddle and there used to be two couples at a time dancing, and they would put two half-pence in the plate, and Raftery would rattle them and say, 'It's good for the two sorts to be together,' and there would be great laughing." And it is also said "there was a welcome before him in every house he'd come to, and wherever he went they'd think the time too short he would be with them." There is a story I often hear told about the marriage near Cappaghagle of a poor servant boy and girl, "that was only a marriage, and not a wedding, till Raftery chanced to come in, and he made it one. There wasn't a bit but bread and herrings in the house, but he made a great song about the grand feast they had, and he put every sort of thing into the song, all the beef that was in Ireland, and went to the Claddagh and didn't leave a fish in the sea. And there was no one at all at it, but he brought all the *bocharts* and poor men in Ireland, and gave them a pound each. He went to bed after without them giving him a drop to drink, but he didn't mind that, when they hadn't got it to give."

The wandering, unrestrained life was probably to his mind, and I do not think there is a word of discontent or complaint in any of his verses, though he was always poor, and must often have known hardship. In the "Talk with the Bush" he describes, in his whimsical, exaggerated way, a wetting, which must have been one of very many :—

"It chanced that I was travelling and the rain was heavy ; I stepped aside, and not without reason, till I'd get a wall or a bush that would shelter me.

"I didn't meet at the side of a gap only an old, withered, miserable bush, and it bent with the west wind. I stepped under it and it was a wet place ; torrents of rain coming down from all quarters, east and west and straight downwards ; its equal I couldn't see unless it is seeds that's winnowed through a riddle. It was sharp, angry, fierce, and stormy, like a deer running and racing past me. The storm was drowning the country, and my case was pitiful and I suffering without cause.

"An hour and a quarter it was raining, there isn't a drop that fell but would fill a quart and put a heap on it afterwards ; there's not a wheat or rape mill in the neighbourhood but it would set going in the middle of a field."

At last relief comes :—

"It was shortly then the rain grew weak, the sun shone and the wind rose. I moved on, and I smothered and drowned in wet, till I came to a little house and there was welcome before me. Many quarts of water I squeezed from my skirt and my cape. I hung my hat on a nail, and I lying in a sweet flowery bed. But I was up again in a little while ; we began sports and pleasures, and it was with pride we spent the night."

But there is a verse in his "Argument with Whisky" that seems to have a wistful thought in it, perhaps of the settled home of his rival Callinan :—"Cattle is a nice thing for a good man to have, and his share of land to reap wheat and barley, money in the chest, and a fire in the evening time, and to be able to give shelter to a man on his road, a hat and shoes in the fashion ;—I think indeed that would be much better than to be going from place to place drinking *uisge beatha*."

"He was a thin man," I am told by one who knew him, "not very tall, with a long frieze coat and corduroy trousers. He was very strong, and he told my father there was never any man he wrestled with but he could throw him, and that he could lie on his back and throw up a bag with four hundred of wheat in it, and take it up again. He couldn't see a stin, but he would walk all the roads and give the right turn without ever touching the wall. My father was wondering at him one time they were out together, and he said, 'Wait till we come to the turn to Athenry, and don't tell me of it, and see if I don't make it out right.' And sure enough when they came to it, he gave the right turn, and just in the middle." This is explained by what another man tells me. "There was a blind piper with him one time in Gort, and they set out together to go to Ballylee, and it was late, and they couldn't find the stile that led down there, near Early's house. And they would have stopped there till somebody would come by, but Raftery said he'd go back to Gort and step it again ; and so he did, turned back a mile to Gort and started from there. He counted every step that he stepped out, and when he got to the stile he stopped straight before it."

His knowledge and his poetic gift are by many supposed to have been

given to him by the invisible powers who grow visible to those who have lost their earthly sight. An old woman who had often danced to his music says :—"When he went to his rest at night, it's then he'd make the songs in the turn of a hand, and you would wonder in the morning where he got them." And a man who, though he had seen him, "was too much taken up with sport and hurling when he was a boy to think much about him," says, "he got the gift. It's said he was asked which would he choose, music or the talk. If he chose music, he wou:ld have been the greatest musician in the world, but he chose the talk, and so he was a great poet. Where could he have found all the words he put in his songs if it wasn't for that?" An old woman, who is more orthodox, says, "I often used to see him when I was a little child in my father's house at Corker; he'd often come in there, and here to Coole he used to come as well. He couldn't see a stin, and that is why he had such great knowledge, God gave it to him. And his songs have gone all through the world, and he had a voice that was like the wind."

Legends are already growing up about his death. It has been said that "he knew the very day his time would be up, and he went to Galway and brought a plank to the house he was stopping at, and he put it in the loft, and he told the people of the house his time was come, and bid them make a coffin for him with the plank, and he was dead before morning." And another story says that he died alone in an empty house, and that flames were seen about the house all night, and the flames were the angels waking him. But many told me he had died in the house of a man near Craughwell, and one day last autumn I went there to look for it, and the first person I asked was able to tell me that the house where Raftery had died was the other side of Craughwell a mile and a half away. It was a warm hazy day, and as I walked along the flat deserted road that Raftery had often trodden, I could see few landmarks, only a few more grey boulders or a few more stunted hazel bushes in one stone-walled field than in another. At last I came to a thatched cottage, and when I saw an old man sitting outside it with hat and coat of the old fashion, I felt sure it was he who had been with Raftery at the last. He was ready to talk about him, and told me how he had come there to die. "I was a young chap at that time. It must have been in the year 1835, for my father died in '36, and I think it was a year before him that Raftery died. What did he die of? Of weakness—he had been bet up in Galway with some fit of sickness he had, and then he came to gather a little money about the country, and when he got here he was bet up again. He wasn't an old man,—only about seventy years. He was in the bed for about a fortnight. When he got bad my father said it was best get a priest for him, but the parish priest was away, but we saw Father Nagle passing the road, and I went out and brought him in and he gave him absolution and anointed him. He had no pain, only his feet were cold, and the boys used to be warming a stone

in the fire and putting it to them in the bed. My mother wanted to send to Galway where his wife and his daughter and his son were stopping, so that they would come and care him, but he wouldn't have them, somehow he didn't think they treated him well."

I had been told that the priest had refused him absolution when he was dying until he forgave some enemy, and that he had said afterwards, "If I forgave him with my mouth I didn't with my heart," but this was not true. "Father Nagle made no delay in anointing him, but there was a carpenter down the road there he said too much to, and annoyed him one time, and the carpenter had a touch of the poet too and was a great singer, and he came out and beat him and broke his fiddle, and I remember when he was dying, the priest bringing in the carpenter and making them forgive one another and shake hands; and the carpenter said, 'If two brothers were to have a falling-out, they'd forgive one another, and why wouldn't we.' He was buried in Killeenin; it wasn't a very big funeral, but all the people of the village came to it. He used often to come and stop with us. . . . It was of a Christmas Eve he died, and he had always said that if God had a hand in it, it was of a Christmas day he'd die."

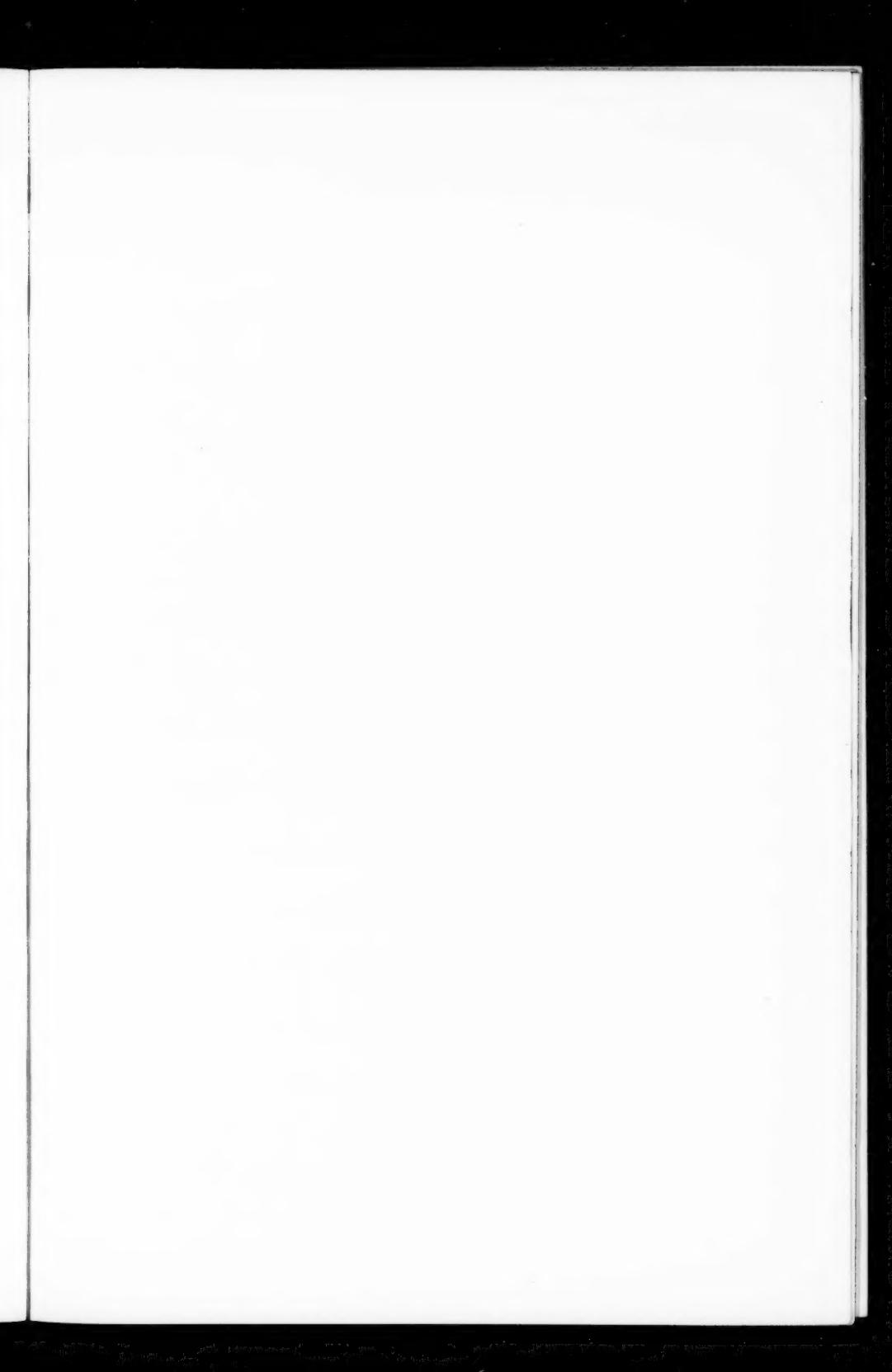
I went to Killeenin to look for his grave. There is nothing to mark it, but two old men who had been at his funeral pointed it out to me. There is a ruined church in the graveyard, and there is a desolate outlook on to the shell of an ill-fated house. Its old owner had been forced to part with it, and its new owner had been shot in the Land League days, and the house itself had been burned down afterwards. The little graveyard itself is crowded—"so that there are people killing one another now to get a place in it." I was asked into a comfortable black-raftered house close by, and its owner said, with almost a touch of jealousy, "I think it was coming in here Raftery was the time he died, but he got bet up and turned in at the house below. It was of a Christmas Eve he died, and that shows he was blessed, there's a blessing on them that die at Christmas. It was at night he was buried, for Christmas day no work could be done, but my father and a few others made a little gathering to pay for a coffin, and it was made by a man in the village on St. Stephen's day, and then he was brought here, and the people from the villages followed him, for they all had a wish for Raftery. But night was coming on when they got here and in digging the grave there was a big stone in it, and the boys thought they would put him in a barn and take the night out of him. But my mother—the Lord have mercy on her—had a great veneration for Raftery, and she sent out two mould candles lighted, for in these days the women used to have their own mould and to make their own candles for Christmas. And we held the candles there where the grave is near the gable end of the church, and my brother went down into the grave and got the stone out and we buried him. And there was a sharp breeze blowing at the time, but it never quenched the candles or moved the flame of them, and that shows that the Lord had a hand in him,"

He and all the neighbours were glad to hear that there is soon to be a stone put over the grave. "He is worthy of it, he is well worthy of it," they kept saying. A man who was digging sand by the roadside took me to his house, and his wife showed me a little book in which the "Repentance" and other poems had been put down for her in phonetic Irish by a beggar who had once stayed in the house. "Many who go to America hear Raftery's songs sung out there," they told me with pride.

As I went back along the silent road there was suddenly a sound of horses and a rushing and waving about me, and I found myself in the midst of the County Galway foxhounds, coming back from cub-hunting. The English Master and his wife rode by, and I wondered if they had ever heard of the poet whose last road this had been. Most likely not, for it is only among the people that his name has been kept in remembrance.

There is still a peasant poet here and there making songs in the "sweet Irish tongue" in which Death spoke to Raftery, and I think these will be held in greater honour as the time of awakening goes on. But the nineteenth century has been a time of swift change in many countries, and in looking back on that century in Ireland there seem to have been two great landslips, the breaking of the continuity of the social life of the people by the famine, and the breaking of the continuity of their intellectual life by the shoving out of the language. It seems as if there were no place left now for the wandering verse-maker, and that Raftery may have closed the long procession that had moved on unbroken during so many centuries on its journey to "the meadow of the dead."

AUGUSTA GREGORY.





FIELD-MARSHAL  
LORD ROBERTS OF KANDAHAR AND WATERFORD

*From a Photograph by POOLE, Waterford*

## THE HERO

**S**AY is he young or old  
 With gaily nodding plume,  
 Booted and spurred for exploit bold,  
 And on his furrowed cheek Hope's fadeless bloom?

A Paladin he seems  
 Invincible in fight,  
 Such as ride forth in fancy's dreams  
 With lance in rest to battle for the right.

Fearless amid alarm—  
 No reckless braggart he,  
 Vaunting aloud, that in his arm—  
 That in his arm alone is victory.

But eager to bestow  
 On comrades lavishly  
 More than their meed, for men to know  
 That these have earned the plaudits, they not he.

He checked the insulting foe,  
 He raised the flag that fell,  
 He aimed, he struck the well-poised blow,  
 He bore the brunt of war and bore it well.

The patient, toiling brain  
 Devised and planned it all;  
 Intrepidly again, again  
 He led the way and gave the clarion call.

The soldiers of the Cross  
 May learn from him to-day  
 To march through sorrow, shame, and loss,  
 Rejoicing, hoping, all the way.

Oh! true and tender heart,  
 Oh! noble, gallant soul,  
 Not ever shall thy fame depart,  
 While on and on the endless ages roll.

J. G. S.

## A WOMAN OF ASHANTI

**H**OT is hardly the word to give an adequate idea of the temperature that grilled the inhabitants of Debissu, one morning in August, about a year ago.

Save for an old negro woman snoring under one of the "umbrella-trees" that grew around the square, the market-place was deserted. Even the wire-haired goats and skinny fowls that are always in the foreground of a West African picture had disappeared, and the only creatures stirring were the flies. It was too hot even for them to move their wings, and they lazily crawled over the rotting heaps of corn-shucks and plantain trash that littered the ground.

Now and then a leaf would fall from the great banyan-tree in the middle of the square, and as it touched the broiling earth its seared edges curled in anguish as if to escape the fiery contact. The splotches of black shade by the umbrella-trees looked like pits in the glaring sea of sunlight, and the baking clay cracked under the sun's rays.

The little town of Debissu is situated just seven degrees north of the equator, in a district that once formed part of the kingdom of Ashanti. It lies in a round hollow set like a punch-bowl among the surrounding hillocks. The surf-bound coast of Guinea is a hundred miles away, and never a breath of salt-laden breeze comes to gladden the hearts of its sweltering inhabitants. In the centre of the hollow lies a stagnant pond where the fetish alligators are kept. The margin is fringed by rotting heaps of offal, over which scraggy-necked vultures scramble and fight, and a few cocoanut palms bend their yellow fronds over the water. The brown mud-huts of Debissu, with their palm-thatched roofs and grimy courtyards, cluster round three sides of the pond, while on the fourth lies the open market-place.

On this particularly torrid day the village seemed deserted, and there was not a sign of life anywhere, save in a corner of the square behind the big banyan-tree.

Korker, the wife of Oro the potter, reclined on a rush-woven mat, in a strip of shade that was thrown by the projecting thatch of her husband's house. Without a shadow of doubt, she was a comely woman. Not, perhaps, in the first bloom of youth, as reckoned in West Africa, where a girl is counted a woman before she is in her "teens," but she was just in her prime.

Korker need not have told any fibs about her age, because she did not know it. A West African woman knows nothing about years and months; her age is gauged by her attractiveness, and she does not

have to worry about birthdays. She remembers that she was so high when the Kroboes fought against her own tribe, or that she had a baby a few days before the King of Akwamo was flayed alive by the Chief of Denkera. Beyond those wide *data*, she knows nothing and cares less.

Judging by our ideas, however, Korker might have been twenty years old or thereabout. She was rather tall, and her limbs and bust had the full roundness of the matured woman. Her skin was like ebony, and there was a bloom upon it like the pearly freshness on a big blue plum. Her eyes were deep and brown, and long up-curling lashes gave them a languorous and liquid expression.

Her entire costume consisted of a dark blue cotton sheet, about the size of a tablecloth, wound around her, and fastened by a peculiar fold just above her bosom. The woolly locks were tightly twisted into a multitude of tiny plaits, and were kept in place by a number of gold-headed skewers. Around her neck there hung two strings of the tiny green beads that were fashionable in Debissu at the time, and on her wrists were three bracelets of copper wire.

The lady sprawled on the red-bordered mat, and the simple garment outlined with distinctness the graceful curves of her limbs and body. One hand supported her head, while with the other she drew quaint patterns on the sandy ground. On her back her baby was straddled in the African fashion. The infant was sound asleep. Its tiny black feet stuck out over the mother's hips, and the little umber-coloured face with the woolly skull dangled behind over the rim of the blue cloth, as if its neck was broken.

A series of snores, at regular intervals, could be heard issuing from the interior of the brown hut behind Korker, and they marked the peaceful repose of Oro, her lord and master. A louder grunt than the rest roused the woman from her reverie, and as she noted the broadening width of the strip of shade, she thought it must be nearly time for her to arise and prepare the evening meal of crushed corn and pounded plantain.

Korker was the envy of the town. She reigned in Oro's house, and never had he even threatened to bring in Number Two or Three, after the manner of Debissu. He loved her to a degree that is rarely found among the men of Africa, and her lot was very different from that of the other women of the tribe. She never toiled beside him in the field at the back of the hills where he grew his plantains and his yams, and the soft roundness of her limbs was unmarred by the endless labour that is the usual portion of a negro wife.

Three years ago Oro had journeyed to far Sefwi, where the girls are as virtuous as they are the contrary in Debissu, and the "dower-money" that he had paid to her father was twice as much as he would have had to give for a girl of his own tribe. She was warranted pure and sound, and there had been a week of spirited haggling before seven flint-lock guns and thirteen cases of gin were decided upon as the final bargain.

The women of Oro's tribe, however, who knew their sex and loved not the stranger within their gates, sneered to the full extent of their generous lips at the vaunted respectability of Korker, and swore that a certain knotted stick, wielded by her father, was to be thanked for it. They vowed that Oro would have a rude awakening, and they waited for the climax.

Korker was just remembering, with some vexation, that there were no green peppers in the compound to mix with the "*fu-fu*," when she heard, behind her, the slip-slap of a sandalled foot approaching the side of her husband's house.

It was Abdu Fullani, the Hausa corporal, and there was a marked twinkle of pleasure in her eye when she saw the bold soldier stop and lean against the seared trunk of the banyan-tree.

He picked his big white teeth with a dried wisp of palmetto, and smiled at Korker with condescending admiration, as befitted the hero of a hundred conquests. It was evidently not his first introduction to the dusky beauty, and his remarks, on this occasion, must have sounded sweet in Korker's ears, for she giggled "He-he!" every now and then in a manner that was coquettish and coy.

His compliments, after the African fashion of their kind, had the airy grace of a hippopotamus, and the only merit of his pretty phrases lay in the accent of conviction that was stamped upon them.

"Ai! Korker," said he; "what a beautiful woman you are! You are rounder than the sleekest cow in all my father's herds, away in far Kanu. Your eyes fill my bones with fire, and your teeth are like the little white cowries on the seashore."

Korker smiled and simpered, and she twisted her lips into that peculiar pucker which, in West Africa, stands for "None of your blarney!" With a brown forefinger she continued to trace quaint designs on the sandy ground, and Abdu proceeded to lay it on still more generously. There were few limits to his compliments, and their blunt realism would have warmed a slug. The whole gamut of African flattery was poured into her ears, and it was only when he wished to sit beside her on the red-bordered mat that Korker bade him remember that she was the spouse of Oro, and that her husband's wrath was terrible.

"Peuh! That for Oro's anger!" rejoined the contemptuous soldier, as he spat on the ground, and scraped the sole of his sandal over the spot. "What care I for him, the son of an outcast woman! May Allah shrivel up the crooked animal, and if he dare to come before me, I, Abdu Fullani, will break his back across my knee!"

Abdu Fullani was a swashbuckler and a swaggerer, and the intentions he expressed with regard to the spouse of the woman he admired were blood-curdling and vivid. He was a corporal in the Hausa Force, and a handsome type of that admirable corps. Those who know little about the Gold Coast may pardonably not be expected to know that the British colony in question maintains a very efficient little army of some

thousand Moslem soldiers, most of whom have been enlisted in the distant *hinterland*, on the confines of the Sahara. They have often been compared with the wiry little Ghurkas, and being officered by Englishmen, make a fighting force that is admirably suited to maintain order among the hundred tribes in West Africa who have to keep the Queen's peace.

There had been a small row in Debissu. The young men of one part of the town had, one day, thought fit to express their meanest contempt for the youth of the other side. The rusty flint-lock guns were pulled out of their cotton cases, and when the sun had gone down on the wrath of the men, seven corpses lay in the midst of the howling mourners.

A report of the affair had reached the Governor on the coast, and the white Commissioner, who had been despatched to make inquiry, after imposing a fine of two hundred pounds upon the chief, had taken away with him seven of the ringleaders who were to swing from the walls of Usher Fort as an encouragement to others.

Twelve Hausas, under the command of our friend Abdu Fullani, had been left behind to collect the fine, and the attentions of these *beaux sabreurs* to the goods, chattels, and wives of the elders of Debissu had been so unremitting that very little of the fine now remained to be collected.

With a practised eye, Fullani had speedily singled out Korker for his flattering attentions. The fact that she was the spouse of Oro had only enhanced her attractions. But though he so boldly expressed his contempt for the husband in question, the gay Lothario had shown no anxiety to place himself directly in the path of the potter, who was reputed a stern and vengeful individual.

The gallant corporal was a fine specimen of the black mercenary, and his square shoulders and straight legs were admirably set off by the becoming uniform of the Hausa Force. He was as black as a coal, but the Arab blood that had flowed in the veins of his forbears still lingered in the straightness of his nose and the curve of his eyebrows. The dusky African maid, like her sister in colder climes, loves the bright coat of the soldier; and the fascinations of Abdu's pretty uniform had not been lost on Korker. She mentally compared the plain sheet-like cloth worn by her husband with the blue serge kit of the Hausa, and there was much favour in her eyes for Fullani's smart jacket, that was bordered with red braid, while the baggy breeches that ended just below the knee were full of attraction. The uniform was embellished by a broad red sash wound round the man's waist, and on his head, with a rakish cock to one side, Abdu wore the crimson fez of the Hausa, with the badge of the Force worked in gold.

In the middle of one of his boldest compliments, the soldier was interrupted by a sudden demonstration on the part of Korker's baby. Madame Oro was rather annoyed, for she was sorry to lose the end of Abdu's pretty phrase. She just gave a sort of lateral wriggle to her

back, the effect of which was to make the child's head waggle in a very distressing manner over the edge of the supporting cloth, and the baby's howls had rather a comic quaver in them. The infant must have had the lungs of a fog-horn concealed in its frail carcass, for its cries waked the echoes of the village. They roused the slumbering father in the hut, and Abdu's guilty conscience suggested to him the propriety of withdrawing from the scene before the advent of the despised husband.

Oro issued from the hut just as the soldier departed swaggering down another alley. The man had awakened from his *siesta* in a bad humour, and there was a sinister frown upon his face. He held a cutlass in his hand, and his cloth was loosely hitched about his waist.

He barely glanced at his wife, as she sat on the woven mat, and he scowled at the baby as it howled. "Order your child to be silent," said he; "he cries like the cub of a *patacoo*! I am going to the small field at the foot of the Fetish Hill, and will return before the sun sinks behind the banyan-tree. See that my evening meal is ready when I come back, and let there be peppers in plenty sprinkled on the *fu-fu*." And he strode on into the square.

He caught sight of the red *fes* of a Hausa in the distance, and the bit of colour increased his ill-humour. Retracing his steps, he approached his wife, and with uplifted cutlass bent threateningly over her, as she reclined on the mat. "Hear me, Korker!" he hissed. "Let your teeth bite your tongue in twain before you allow it to speak one single word to those Hausa thieves who are eating up the town. The vermin have collected the fine that was laid upon us by the white man, and thrice as much again have they stolen from the elders of Debissu. Nothing has been safe from the Moslem robbers. Even the daughter of the Fetish priest have they taken away, and his mother they beat with tamarind rods. Ah, wife! if I found that you even looked in their direction I would kill you, Korker—ay, kill you with this cutlass, both you and the child as you lie there," and the jealous man bent menacingly over the shrinking woman.

Korker was much relieved when her angry lord at last pursued his way to his plantain-patch, and she shivered a little with apprehension when she reflected on the terrible scene there would have been if Oro had heard even a tithe of her conversation with the fascinating Abdu.

"He will kill me some day," she said to herself, "and I am very weary of him. He is getting old, and the women in the market laugh because I am alone in the house." And then Korker found herself smiling when she thought of the pretty speeches that the corporal had made to her before her husband awoke. The shadows were lengthening under the umbrella-trees in the square, and the village was beginning to stir after its midday lethargy. Korker, giving a hitch to the baby on her back, arose and set about her household avocations.

A few hours later, Oro returned to his little home; on his head he

carried a great bunch of green plantains that weighed as much as a sheep. Three hours of honest labour had lightened his heart, his jealous fit had vanished, and his mood was very different from that in which he had awakened. He remembered that Korker had never given him cause for jealousy, and he would beg her pardon for his roughness to her. "She is a gold nugget among the wives of Debissu," he said to himself as he threw into a corner of the courtyard the great bunch of plantains. "She shall have the finest string of beads that the Fanti trader has in his pack, and I will tell her that she is the light of my eyes and the sweetness of my life!"

"Hai, Korker! Korker! my beautiful one, pride of my house! Come here, and listen to the words I shall speak. Korker!"

But no answer came. The hut and the courtyard were silent as a desert, and the red mud walls only reverberated with the echo of Oro's calls. A presentiment of evil rushed through his brain, and he glared around the compound as if seeking for a clue. His eyes fell on the hearth that lay in the middle of the yard, and he saw that no smoke arose from between the three great stones, neither was there any pot upon them. A mocking laugh sounded in the narrow alley alongside the hut, and like a wild animal Oro rushed through the little gateway. There he met a group of neighbours and others who had gathered to see the fun. Several of the matrons of Debissu were in the front rank, and towards their mocking faces Oro turned instinctively.

"She is gone," said one; and others who had been jealous of Korker, laughed shrilly in his face, and repeated the words.

"She is gone! She is gone! She went away, this very day, with the fine Hausa corporal, and your child was on her back! Ah, ha, Haii!" and the women screamed with glee, and reminded each other, in the coarsest terms, of the boasted virtue of the incomparable stranger from Sefwi.

Oro reeled as if struck in the face. Not a word escaped his lips, but his teeth snapped like those of a dog, his nostrils quivered, and his little eyes glared around with the vacant stare of an idiot. Groping as if in the dark, he tottered towards the doorway of his compound, and stumbling over a stone that lay at the entrance, he flung across the aperture the woven screen of palm-leaves that did duty for a door. The little crowd was awed by the anguish of the deserted man, and even the women dispersed in almost silent groups.

Alone inside the compound, Oro threw himself about like a maddened animal. He rushed at the projecting thatch of the little hut that had been his home and tore out great handfuls, as if he would destroy every sign of her habitation. The carved wooden stool on which she used to sit was lying on its side in the doorway, and he hurled it with all his might at the wall, where it was smashed into splinters. The ghastly image of his protecting Fetish stood in the middle of the yard, and the pot that lay in front of it was full of the boiled corn and palm-oil that he had offered that very morning as an

oblation to the Household God, under whose care he had placed himself. In an instant, the sacred Fetish was strewn in fragments across the yard. The uncanny head of the image, with its glaring eyes of punctured cowries, lay on the grimy hearth, and to complete the sacrilege, the deserted husband cast it with all his might into the pile of refuse that festered in a corner.

The road from Debissu serpentine for a hundred miles and more through a great dense forest that claims the country for its own. Troops of black-haired monkeys perform wonderful gymnastics among the feathery limbs of the oil-palms; tawny-skinned leopards lurk behind the leafy undergrowth, and deadly cobras glide through the ferns that shelter the growing shoots. Even when the sun shines straight from above, its rays just filter through the tangled canopy of leaves, like the *chiaroscuro* of a Gothic church, and the paths are merely winding tunnels that burrow through the crackling jungle.

The little party of black soldiers had left the town just before the setting of the sun, and though it be not the practice in West Africa to travel after dark, they had, for divers reasons, thought it prudent to place as great a distance as possible between them and Debissu before daylight broke on the following morn. Midnight found the little squad tramping sturdily along the winding track, and the town had been left a good ten miles in the rear. Abdu Fullani and his twelve men had collected the uttermost farthing of the fine that had been imposed by the Commissioner, and they were returning to headquarters on the coast to render an account thereof.

The Hausas had not only gathered in the fines which would go to swell the Colonial Treasury, but many a precious bead and length of silken cloth had also left the town that day. Ay—and moreover, beads and silken fabrics did not complete the tale of the tribute that had been extracted from the obedient tribe of Debissu. Among other goods and chattels were four of the finest women of the country-side. They were the comely wives of the elders of the tribe, and they trudged behind the little troop, carrying on their heads the "kits" of their new masters. Though they had whimpered a little when the last hut of their town had been passed, they were not unwilling prisoners. The baggy breeches and the scarlet *cummerbunds* of the swaggering soldiers had found favour in their sight, and the women were nothing loath to accompany the fascinating Hausas to the big unknown towns on the distant coast.

Among the four was the erring Korker. She bore a bundle of Abdu's property upon her head, and on her back Oro's baby still straddled and dangled its little head. After the manner of their kind, the women chattered to each other by the hour, and as they had all similarly wandered into the paths of error, their confidences were very sympathetic. One had left her husband because he beat her every day; another could not get along with her lord's other wives;

while the third despised her man because he had not beaten her as she deserved. That was somewhat the trouble in Korker's case, and she could not help reflecting that if Oro had now and then thrashed her to a jelly she would have respected him more, and things might have been otherwise. There was no doubt about it ; he had been much too good to her, and accordingly deserved the usual fate of husbands who are over-fond.

The men beguiled the way by a monotonous chant, in a minor key, led by Abdu Fullani, and the quaint rhythm wakened the muffled echoes of the forest, as the troops passed under the arching boughs. It was dark as Erebus, save where the light of a lantern, carried by one of the men, flickered along the track, and glinting on the polished side-arms of the soldiers, caught here and there the blaze of a scarlet sash or crimson *fez*.

One of the women was in the middle of a heartrending account of a brutal master, when Korker, with a movement of terror, suddenly grasped her by the arm. The two were the last in the procession, and in spite of the babble of the females and the song of the soldiers, Korker's sharp ears had just caught the sound of approaching footsteps in the rear. Instinctively guessing who the pursuer was, she screamed, "Abdu, Abdu !" and rushing past the intervening people, threw herself on the corporal's neck. "'Tis he, 'tis he, and he will kill me !" she cried, and trembled like an aspen.

The soldiers unsheathed their side-arms, and hastily pushing the women into their centre, stood waiting to repel the attack. No one knew the cause of the alarm ; but the guilty ones, who had precious beads and other loot in their baggage, were ready to fight for the possession of the goods, whose rescue might be attempted. The lantern was held high above their heads, and its pale rays illumined, like an enfeebled searchlight, a short stretch of the narrow path behind them.

The hurried footfalls approached nearer and nearer, and suddenly a human form, clad in a sheet of white cotton that streamed out behind him, was espied rushing towards the group that stood in the middle of the path.

The man's bare feet flew over the ground, and the rapid footfalls were muffled by the soddened moss in the track. His head butted forward like a battering-ram, and the yellow light of the lantern gleamed on the sweating shoulders. The man's arms were stretched forward while he ran, as if groping in the dark, and in one hand he flourished a cutlass.

With a howl that was inhuman in its frenzied rage, Oro rushed on the foremost man in the group. The name "Korker" gurgled almost inarticulately in his throat, and he attacked the soldiers with the fury of a madman. In an instant, the man was beaten to the ground, and the cutlass dashed from his grasp. One of the Hausas had already raised the stock of his rifle high above his head, to beat out

the brains of the wretched man, when Korker, throwing herself between them, implored Abdu to prevent the death of Oro.

The gallant corporal had not been conspicuous in the affair, and had in fact restricted his action to the issue of orders from the rear of the little squad. He now came forward, and though it would have suited him much better to settle with the unfortunate husband there and then, he feared that trouble might ensue at headquarters if it transpired that a man had been killed by them on the march down to the coast. Acting under his orders, the soldiers sat on various portions of the luckless Oro, and by means of ropes reduced him to the condition of a parcel, leaving sufficient freedom to his legs to allow the man to walk. They then formed up in procession, and the little troop, with its sullen prisoner, continued the journey through the forest.

Four days later, travel-stained and worn with the dreary march, the detachment arrived at its destination. Accra, the big town on the seaboard of the Gold Coast, was full of wonders to Korker and the other three women from Debissu. They had never strayed beyond the limits of the great forest before, and the broad, open roads of red clay, the massive houses of the trading-factories, and the whitewashed bastions of the old forts guarding the shore, were all very extraordinary objects to their untutored eyes.

Right glad were the soldiers to get back to their cantonments, and the long rows of huts in the Hausa lines were very attractive after their sojourn in the wilds of Debissu. The women, with kohl-streaked eyes and garments of brightly tinted cloths, turned out in numbers to welcome back Abdu Fullani and his men. They looked with much curiosity on the four women in the procession, and the two wives whom the handsome corporal owned made faces at each other and pointed significantly at Korker, who was carrying Abdu's kit upon her head. They showed no surprise, however, and respectfully bent their backbones and smoothed down their knees, much after the manner of the Japanese, when their lord presented to them his new companion.

Next day, case No. 7 on the Cause List in the District Commissioner's Court was that of the Queen *versus* Oro, for that he did, on such and such a day, make an assault upon Corporal Fullani, Privates Ali, Wangara, and others of the Gold Coast Constabulary, while in the performance of their duty.

It was an uninteresting matter to the good people of Accra, and the benches of the long, narrow room in which the magistrate sat were only sparsely occupied by half-a-dozen semi-naked ragamuffins who preferred the cool, whitewashed court to the glare of the square outside.

The wretched Oro had not the faintest notion of what was going on. During the weary march to the coast he had barely opened his mouth save to eat and drink mechanically, while his eyes stared undeviatingly at the man and woman who had robbed him of his happy-

ness. He had slept in the guard-room of the Fort on the previous night, and the language of the people of Accra was as Greek to him. Once or twice he thought that the proceedings bore some resemblance to the Court of Justice which the Chief of Debissu held every morning, and where the decisions depended on the amount of gold-dust that the contending parties could produce. He knew that he had not a single grain of gold about him with which the judge might be propitiated, and his heart sank in despair.

One after another, the Hausas went into the witness-box and recited out a consistent account of the unprovoked attack made upon them by the prisoner. Corporal Abdu carefully restricted himself to facts, and the other two soldiers deposed to the well-known bad character borne by the prisoner in his native town. Every word of the evidence had to be translated by the court interpreter. The Hausas spoke in their own tongue, of which the magistrate could not understand a syllable. Oro knew not a word of either English or Hausa; while the Fanti interpreter, who would have died sooner than confess his ignorance, knew barely fifty words of the dialect of Debissu.

With head drooping on his chest, the prisoner stood in listless apathy behind the wooden rail that served as a dock. The plain white cloth, that was draped around him in the folds of a Roman *toga*, slipped from off his shoulders, and he knotted it loosely about his waist.

When called upon for his defence, the man at last roused himself and shook off his dejected mien. A broad piazza, outside the court, partly shrouded in gloom the long whitewashed hall, but a vivid ray of sunlight came slanting through a door, slashing across the man's face and muscular chest. The short, grizzling hairs on the coffee-coloured skin, catching the golden light, gleamed like sparks of electricity. His eyes shone like sloes under the overhanging brows, and his straight yellow teeth reflected the flashing ray.

In the resonant accents of his native tongue Oro poured out his tale of the wrongs that had been heaped upon his head. His words rolled out louder and louder until they echoed among the rafters of the roof, and though the magistrate understood not a word, yet he was impressed by the man's expression and the cadence of his tones.

But Oro's peroration was all thrown away. The Fanti interpreter, who felt no interest in the troubles of a "bushman," knew better than to waste the time of the court by a verbatim translation, and the account he gave to the magistrate amounted to a bald denial of the charge. Oro had not a single witness to call on his side, and as he noted the expression of triumphant confidence on the features of his enemy Abdu, who stood in the court in all the glory of his full uniform, his heart felt ready to burst with rage and hate.

"Perfectly clear case," thought the weary magistrate, who, for the last quarter of an hour, had been drawing pictures of coffins and tombstones on his blotting-pad. "Surly-looking beggar, and probably

a dangerous character. Can't waste any more time over him. Three months' imprisonment with hard labour. Take him away. Next case, please."

During the period that her unhappy husband cracked stones behind the walls of her Majesty's prison at Accra, the faithless Korker adapted herself to conditions that were very different from those that had been her lot in distant Debissu. Bitterly she regretted the loss of all the years she had spent in that unsophisticated land, and the waste of that beauty which was finding so many admirers in the big town of the white men on the coast. Her new life, however, was not without drawbacks; and when the novelty began to wear away, my lady Korker found herself wondering whether she might not make a better hand out of the cards in her pack.

Though they had welcomed her so sweetly on her arrival, under the eyes of their lord, the other two wives of the handsome corporal had speedily showed that an interloper was not at all to their liking. Korker had a hard struggle to assert her position in the household, and the fact that she joined the company with another man's baby upon her back was a considerable handicap.

Abdu's residence had never been intended to accommodate a harem. It was merely a large rectangular hut, built of red clay, and it had a russet thatch of guinea-grass. It was the last detached house in one of the long rows that constitute the Hausa cantonments at Accra, and a low mud wall at the back enclosed a grimy courtyard in which all the household avocations were carried on.

Each wife had a little dog-hole opening on to the yard, and the three ladies were constantly in each other's way. They quarrelled from morn till night, and their language was so picturesque that old Fara, the wife of the Hausa priest living in the next quarters, and whose vocabulary was noted as the richest in Accra, was impelled to complain of the epithets that were flung about Abdu's courtyard.

Abdu soon wearied of the endless strife. Time after time, his midday snooze would be disturbed by violent appeals from the angry women, and on several occasions he dealt out even justice by administering to all three in turn a handsome thrashing.

All this was not the rosy existence that Korker had imagined would be her lot when she had eloped with the fascinating corporal, and there were moments when she found herself regretting the happy though monotonous harmony of her home in Debissu. The baggy breeches and the scarlet *cummerbunds* were beginning to lose their glamour, and she frequently found her Lothario's tones very different from the honeyed accents that had wrecked her heart under the big banyan-tree. More than once Oro's baby was a comfort to her, and she would pour into the unheeding infant's ear a bitter lament over her disillusionments. She even wondered sometimes what was happening to the unfortunate Oro behind the whitewashed walls of the fort which she could discern from the back of her house.

Such moods, however, were of a very fleeting nature. Admiration was the breath of her nostrils, and she found full compensation for all her woes whenever she noted the fervid admiration of men who gazed upon her charms.

Abdu was very proud of his latest acquisition, and even the wives of the native officers were jealous of the gorgeous appearance of the corporal's lady on high days and holidays. Korker increased the lustre of her eyes by encircling them, after the Hausa fashion, with dark streaks of antimony, and the little twisted plaits that had compressed her wool in Debissu were now replaced by a kind of cushion-shaped chignon, garnished with a silk kerchief of brilliant hue. The corporal lavished the handsomest cloths upon her, and Korker frequently wound many pounds' worth of beautiful brocades around her shapely form.

All this glory, however, was too much for the domestic circle alone. It was very nice to turn the other two women grey with envy, but the fair Korker pined now for further conquests. The stalwart Abdu was certainly miles above the semi-savage Oro, but he in turn was soon eclipsed in her eyes by the fascinations of European attire. His smart uniform was all very well on certain occasions, but it faded into insignificance beside the wonderful garments which Korker saw, for the first time, on the backs of the Christian natives of Accra. She gazed with open-mouthed admiration at the gorgeous young clerks who worked in the white men's factories, and her heart was entirely carried away by her first sight of a shining silk hat.

The headgear in question was resting on the crown of Mr. Montagu Van Kloos, a pay-clerk to the Hausa Force, and on that particular occasion it was being paraded, on a Sunday morning, down the lines in which Abdu had his quarters.

Mr. Van Kloos was a wondrous specimen of evolution in West Africa. Educated at a Mission School, he could write in a hand that beat copperplate. He could also add up a column of figures with such rapidity that he was very valuable in the Paymaster's office. Three penn'orth of "kanky," with a slime of palm-oil, would feed him for two days, and he could well afford to spend the remaining three pounds of his monthly pay in the adornment of his person. His complexion was "khaki," and his mother had handed down to him a tradition that his father was a Dutchman.

"Montagu Van Kloos" had a fine smack about it, and the patronymic had been adopted coincidently with the purchase of his first pair of patent-leather boots. Montagu grovelled before the Paymaster in office hours, and said "Sir" to him every three words, but on two evenings a week he would attend the "Eureka Debating Society," and Mr. Van Kloos's ideas on the subject of "Africa for the Africans" were violent and peculiar.

A lady-killer he was, of heavy calibre, and the list of his conquests would have been as long as the columns of figures he was always

adding up. Abdu Fullani, or any other pure-bred black, would have made three of Van Kloos, but his shrunken chest and meagre limbs were gaily masked by the gorgeous apparel which compelled the devotion of every native woman who looked upon it.

Korker thought she had never beheld so fair a being as the figure which strode down the Hausa lines on that Sunday morning. Besides the tall silk hat, Montagu was encased in a snowy collar that was broad enough for a cuff, a black coat with long tails, and trousers of cerulean hue. His necktie was a marvel, and would have scared a crow. He sucked at a long, ragged cigar, and left a trail of patchouli in his track that lingered like a cloud of miasma. In short, he was a Dream.

Korker was enchanted to find that her admiration was mutual. The pay-clerk's eyes showed marked approval, and after casting a prudent glance around, to see that no jealous Hausa husband was about, Mr. Van Kloos bowed profoundly to the dusky beauty, and inquired after her health with much solicitude. He knew the dialect of Debissu, and they got along like a house afire. Half-an-hour later he flattered himself that he might add another to his list of conquests, and was just explaining to the lady the direction of his abode, when the manly form of Abdu Fullani, swaggering up the road towards the house, suddenly reminded the spark of a pressing engagement elsewhere. Mr. Van Kloos had experienced once or twice before the jealousy of a Hausa, and he was loath to draw upon himself the angry attentions of the fire-eating corporal.

Two days later, Abdu Fullani was summoned to the adjutant's office, and there learnt, much to his disgust, that he had been again selected to proceed immediately to a distant town in the interior, as the bearer of a message from the Governor to the chief of the locality. He had been specially recommended for his discretion by the pay-clerk on duty, who happened to be Mr. Van Kloos. He was ordered to go alone, and told to depart with all speed on his mission.

When he called at the corporal's quarters the next morning, the pay-clerk was intensely annoyed to find that, notwithstanding the explicit instructions given, Abdu had left the house in the care of his two senior wives, but had insisted on being accompanied in his journey by his latest acquisition. All this was told to him by one of the ladies, and she referred to my lady Korker in terms that were fluent and impressive. The baffled gallant was furious at the contretemps, and swore by his gods, both Fetish and Christian, that the corporal would lose his stripes for his disobedience of orders.

It happened too, on that very day, that the unhappy Oro completed the term of three months' imprisonment which he had spent behind the white walls of James Fort in breaking stones and turning a crank. The poor wretch was unaccustomed to the ways of white men. He knew nothing about the discipline of a jail, and had gone through the whole gamut of prison offences.

The sheriff was in despair, and had tried everything. The man was put on the lowest diet; he was kept for days together in solitary confinement; and once, when Oro hit a warder on the skull with one of his cannon-balls that were used in shot-drill, he was treated to a dozen on the back with a venomous-looking stick that had nine tails hanging to one end of it. The man was even more like a wild animal than he had been when he was dragged out of the police court three months before. Night after night, he had spent hours in muttering the name of the woman he loved. And then again, boiling with ungovernable fury, he would curse, in blood-curdling tones, the vile Hausa who had wrecked his life. The four black walls of his solitary cell echoed with shouted threats of revenge, and the maniac would wring his hands and twist his fingers in impotent rage. Once or twice the sheriff thought of sending him to the madhouse, but that meant a lot of red-tape and minute-papers, and, as he was only in for three months, it was hardly worth while bothering about the creature.

Forty-eight hours after their departure from Accra, Corporal Abdu Fullani and Korker were pursuing their way along one of the bush-roads that lead from the coast towards Ashanti. It was an exquisite morning, and the sun had not risen high enough to suck up all the pearls of dew that glittered on the bushes bordering the path. There was a smell of virgin soil, and a freshness in the air that filled the Hausa's veins with vigour, and he stepped out with all the freedom of action that marks the man whose feet have never been cramped by boots. His head was jauntily poised on the sturdy neck, and his arms swung in vigorous rhythm. According to the changeless African custom, the man walked ahead, as beseems the lord and master, while the woman followed half-a-dozen paces in the rear, carrying on her head Abdu's side-arms and a bundle of his other kit.

Korker was exceedingly sulky. The sudden marching order had much annoyed her, and a weary jaunt through the "bush" was not at all to her liking. She had been forbidden to take any of her belongings with her, save Oro's baby, who was too young to be left behind, and there was consequently no prospect of beguiling the journey by dazzling the eyes of less fortunate females with the glories of her wardrobe.

When Abdu had expressed the desire that she should accompany him to Ashanti, Korker had attempted to contest the point. To the huge delight of the other two ladies, Abdu, however, had then adduced such convincing arguments, in the shape of a thick and knotted stick, that the humbled Korker was fain to follow her imperious lord out of Accra in a very sulky and discontented frame of mind.

A hundred yards farther along that road, a gigantic silk-cotton tree grew by the side of the path. Its buttressed trunk stood clear of the surrounding vegetation, and a great limb threw an arch right across the track. There was not a sound save the never-ceasing *tsik-tsik* of

the crickets, and the fresh green leaves of the tree were barely ruffled by the soft breeze that floated down the path.

Nevertheless, if any one had peered keenly through the interstices of those leaves, he might have seen that there was a living thing lying close along that great branch, and whose position there was strange and menacing.

It was the chocolate-coloured body of a man, with the remains of a ragged white cloth tied about his loins. He lay along the upper side of the grey limb like a monstrous snake, and the glitter in the eyes that peered through the leaves was as evil as the sparks in the orbs of a cobra that is going to strike. One hand convulsively clutched the ragged bark, while from the other there protruded the keen blade of a pointed knife, upon which played, now and then, a flash of sunlight as it filtered through the tangled foliage.

Abdu Fullani stepped cheerily along, singing lustily a Hausa song out of the exuberance of his spirits. The withered leaves on the path crackled under his springy tread, and now and again he threw a mocking word over his shoulder at the sulky Korker as she trudged a couple of yards behind him. A few steps farther brought him into the shadow cast by the arching limb of the silk-cotton tree. The leaves scarcely rustled, but a blood-curdling howl suddenly echoed through the forest, and, like a flash, a great black body, that seemed all legs and arms, swooped out of the tree upon the unsuspecting Hausa, smiting him to the ground.

The men fought like beasts of the forest. They bit and struggled and intertwined their sweating limbs in frantic endeavour to clutch each other's throat. They rolled in deadly embrace from one side of the path to the other, and the russet leaves that littered the ground arose in clouds around the wrestling men.

Neither uttered a word, but broken gasps and snaps gurgled in their throats like the sounds made by wild animals in hideous conflict. Chocolate-coloured arms and legs, with muscles standing clear like cords, writhed about each other in horrid contortions, and the joints cracked under the strain with a dry and gruesome sound. Sometimes a ray of light, flashing through the leaves overhead, glinted on the staring eyeballs of the madman, and sometimes it gleamed on the polished blade of the knife that seemed to squirm like a snake between the panting bodies.

Louder and more stertorous grew the breathing, and the dust that rose in clouds around the twain rendered it hard to distinguish the phases of the combat. Presently the faded leaves seemed to cling stickily to each other, and there were splashes of red on the tawny ground. A little streamlet of fresh-drawn blood flowed sluggishly to the side of the path, and there was a rattle in the throat of the Hausa. With a last superhuman effort he twined his legs around the madman's waist, and pressing his hands against the forehead of his antagonist, he pushed with a mighty strain until the man's neck

cracked and fell sideways over his back. Two or three more spasms, and all was over. A leg here and an arm there contracted slowly in dying agony, and the two bodies lay silent and motionless on the fallen leaves.

The attack had been so sudden that the woman walking behind the Hausa had scarcely been able to realise what was happening. Korker gazed spellbound on the spectacle before her. The nearest village was miles behind, and help was nowhere to be had. It is perhaps doubtful if she would have called for it, even had it been available. She noted almost with apathy the phases of the horrid struggle that was going on, and wondered with something like unconcern what the issue would be. The woman was almost as tired of Abdu as she had been of the potter, and cared not much which way the matter ended. Standing a few feet away down the path, she looked upon the scene like a dumb animal. The baby straddling on her back was sound asleep as usual, and its little mouth lay wide open under the gentle breathing while its father struggled for life or death with the other man.

When all was still, and the iridescent particles of dust that had filled the air were settling down once more, Korker stepped slowly forwards towards the bodies. The corporal lay on his back, with the warm blood welling slowly from a gaping gash in his firm black throat, and she saw that he was dead. The legs of the other man were twined in death's embrace about the limbs of his enemy, and his broken neck was forced to its utmost under the dying clutch of the Hausa.

Korker gazed for an instant at the two bodies lying in the path. A mosquito just then alighted on her ankle, and with a sounding smack she closed the career of the insect. Then, hitching her baby's legs more comfortably around her hips, the woman turned her back upon the scene, and with a heart that was neither light nor heavy, she remembered Mr. Montagu Van Kloos, and placidly retraced her steps towards the big town on the coast.

"Souvent femme varie,  
Bien fol est qui s'y fie!"

and especially in West Africa.

H. HESKETH BELL.

LETTERS TO JACK CORNSTALK: II.  
FROM AN AUSTRALIAN IN LONDON

ENGLAND, December 1900.

EAR JACK,—In my last letter, I promised to tell you something about St. Paul's, the Tower, and those places. You remember the story of a rising young Australian politician who came home (how glibly the "home" comes!)—who came home on business, stayed some months, and went back without having seen either Westminster Abbey or the Tower, and without having been once inside the British House of Commons. He saw St. Paul's—he couldn't very well have dodged it. We couldn't understand his constitution at the time, but I think I realise the thing now. You see, we have come so far to see the big, old, or otherwise wonderful (or eccentric) things that we've been hearing about since childhood, and they are so near that we experience that feeling of dulness or disinterestedness that comes after long waiting, or expectation, and just before the climax. Besides, we come from the land o' lots of time and bring the atmosphere of it with us, round ourselves; so we reckon we'll just take things easy to-day and go and do the Abbey or one of those places to-morrow—take a full day for it. I wouldn't be surprised to know that hundreds come from Australia to London, stay some time, and go away without having seen anything to talk about.

If you come to make a living in London it doesn't do to lean up against the Post of To-morrow. Rent days fly round and bills fly in. Your landlady, if you board or have apartments, meets you with a smile of anticipation before you know where you are, and they all think that because you came from Australia, you must have plenty of money. You can't take a supply of tea, sugar, and flour and pitch your camp down the creek, where there's plenty of wood and water, and take a fortnight to think over things. No, you must hustle round. You can live about as cheaply or as expensively as you like in London, but you've got to find those things out before you blue your cheque. You can't borrow a few quid from your mate Jim, or Bill, and take another week or so waiting for something to turn up. A Sydney University boy of my acquaintance came "home" about two years ago to make a living in London with his pen, and he took things easy for a while. Now he answers letters by return post, with, perhaps, a letter-card following his letter, and containing something which he forgot to say in the letter; and I have known him to dash off a post-card, by the same post, with something of importance on it

which he forgot to mention in the letter-card. When he arrived he wore comfortable clothes and a soft felt hat ; now he wears a frock-coat, a top-hat, gloves, a stick, a card-case, a pair of glasses to nip on to his nose with a spring, and all the rest of it. When he has an appointment you'll see him burst out of the front door and rush down the street, jerking his watch out every few yards, his coat tails flying and his top-hat lowered like a battering-ram. It's a wonder he doesn't telescope into that hat against something.

He is a good magazine writer, and a grand chap personally ; and when I get him quiet for an hour he's just the same old chap I knew in Sydney. He has had a crueling which he will never forget. Some day I'll tell you about his life in London—the tragedy of it scared me. Talk about heroes!—

But where was I? Oh ! about St. Paul's and those places. I went through St. Paul's because I found myself on the steps and couldn't think of anywhere else to go just then. I went through the Art Gallery and the Abbey because my literary friend rushed me round and through those places—I must go and see for myself later on.

St. Paul's is one of those places which are built too big, in a way, to *look* large. Looming out of London it does not appear more imposing than a big corrugated-iron shearing-shed looming out of the lonely scrubs Out Back in Australia, and certainly less impressive, when you are properly impressed (or, rather, oppressed) by the extent and loneliness of the mighty Bush.

I haven't seen the ruins of ancient lands—probably they would impress me ; but as far as I have seen of the works of modern man, I can't help thinking that when he sets to work to build a great, useless building with an eye to bigness only, he succeeds in putting up a perishable monument to his own paltriness and the littleness of all his works. And the monument is usually an obstruction to the air, the view, and the traffic—a square with a fountain would be far better there. There's a lot more sense in an ant-hill than in St. Paul's. When man builds a big thing like St. Paul's or St. Peter's, he builds so high that when he wants to put stone josses—I mean statues—on the walls and in the niches, and pictures up round inside, he has to make representations of giants—monsters—else they wouldn't be visible to people on the pavement or floor. And of what use is the result? You've got to study relative distance and heights—say, the size of a man as against the size of the building—in order to get some idea of the "vastness" of the work or structure, and, when you have got it, of what use is it to you? When a dome swells as big as the dome of St. Paul's, it suggests a silly attempt to rival the dome of the sky—and there you are.

Mind, I am not writing with an idea of pulling down everything that's up, in theory, without suggesting anything in its place. Have patience with me for a while. Neither am I going to use the worn-out argument that the millions spent on these buildings would feed

and clothe thousands who are starving and in rags. The great majority of mankind would not be content for a month unless they were slaves; and so why abuse the few who will not be slaves, at least not slaves from a worldly point of view—who escape from being slaves to man either by making money and sticking to it, or by blowing out their brain matter.

I've seen buildings, in Australia and elsewhere, of less than half the size of St. Paul's, which look much more imposing—the Hotel Australia in Sydney, for instance, or the Yankee insurance offices next the G.P.O.; but then, in one case we have unbroken height, and, in the other, fresh clean granite and freestone work. In the guide-book pictures St. Paul's stands out complete—as in the guide-book pictures of most buildings in the world. There is an atmosphere suggestive of wide spaces—of asphalt walks and gardens running out a mile or two in any direction. This is one of the apparently useless lies of civilisation—but I suppose it's born of commercialism, like most other lies—a little branch line lie of commercialism. You don't see much of St. Paul's in London—it is so crowded by buildings nearly as grimy and dingy as itself. A coat of soot round the lower part of the building hides the fine or graceful lines which may be in the stone work, and throws the columns—which should stand out clean and defined—flat against the inner wall; also it reduces the height of the building. The upper half of the building is a dirty, rain-washed white, and the soot is washed in streaks down over the ledges. I remember a black cliff in a corner of the coast in New Zealand, with a cave in it and a round tussock hill on the top; on the upper ledges of the cliff millions of sea-birds were in the habit of roosting. St. Paul's, from a little distance, reminds me of that cliff.

A Londoner tells me that by-and-by I'll look at St. Paul's and other London things, and be ready to kick myself to think I was so foolish as to write as I am writing now. If I do, I'll say so—and probably kick myself. I have so often had occasion to kick myself that I am getting hardened to it.

This Londoner says that he'll go past St. Paul's every day for nine days and see nothing in it, but on the tenth day he'll look up and have a feeling. I suppose when I go back to Sydney and see the General Post Office or the Town-Hall, I'll have a feeling too—because of many things; but when I was in Sydney I passed those buildings nearly every day for years, and the only feeling I had was one of resentment, called up by the vicinity of a cheap restaurant in which I did a six months' perish in other and braver years. Different billets make men look at things in different ways.

English home people are remarkable for their invulnerable common-sense, but they allow the appearance of an awful lot of senseless idolatry in London. And worse!—there is, in London, a fashionable dog graveyard—headstones and all complete—and on one of those headstones the fashionable bereaved one expresses a hope that she'll meet

her darling in heaven—— But I didn't mean to touch on that; I'm not ready for it yet. Such things excite me.

I take off my hat and go into St. Paul's (you have to take off your hat, and that fact is pregnant). I take off my hat and go into St. Paul's, expecting to be impressed and awed—and wishing to be. I think it's a very good and hopeful thing to be impressed, and to feel a reverence for something—in these shallow, cowardly days of a false feeling of manliness, and of the sex problem. But the interior of St. Paul's does not impress me; it suggests to me an imitation of the interior of some older and larger building which I haven't seen yet. The statuary, of white marble, is so smoked that it suggests at once cheap plaster casts coated with grey, or stone-coloured paint to preserve and keep them together. This after the pure white marble in Sydney gardens.

There is a sprinkling of people on a regiment of seats in the centre, under the dome, between the shafts, and the organ is playing. I am not educated to classical or organ music. I suppose that if I were to hear a good voice, now, singing "Bonnie Doon," or "Annie Laurie," or "Mary of Argyle," or any of those old songs, I'd feel nice and miserable. Those are the sort of tunes that impress me. To me the volume of the organ of St. Paul's does not seem greater than that of the Sydney organ—the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere. But remember what I said in my last letter, about not seeing the contrast between a great thing and a small thing of the same kind seen previously.

I go round one side of the nave behind the shafts and meet a spectral figure in a black gown—a man who looks as if he's just come out of the hospital—and he closes a wicket noiselessly and raises a ghostly hand against me—as if there's some one dying up there. He doesn't impress me at all. He might impress the majority, but he impresses me least of anything in St. Paul's. I think he ought to be swept up and taken away in the dust cart.

I go back and round the other way and try to get impressed by the sculpture, and the following three groups in succession is what I see (according to notes taken on the spot, while another convalescent in a black gown looked as if he'd expire before they got him back to the hospital):—

*Major-General Andrew Hay.*—Officer in uniform falling sideways in most awkward position, and supported awkwardly by big, naked man on left (why naked?), who holds the Major-General as if he's got something in his hands in which he is not interested, and which he doesn't know what to do with. Supporter seemingly blind and seasick; lips suggest exhausted disgust. If he has any expression at all, it is the expression of a tired man who is doing a useless and idiotic thing, and knows it, but can't help himself. On the right stands the figure of a private, holding his chin and looking as if he is sorry he got the Major into his present fix. In the background to the right the

usual squeezed-out little row of wooden, under-sized soldiers charging. The rank looks as if it's skewered.

*Sir Thomas Picton*.—Dressed as Alexander the Great, or something, with a property helmet on and little else. Inevitable angel handing him a wreath across the head of a lion. Lion looks curiously, maliciously inclined to bite because the wreath isn't meat. Behind Sir Thomas, and leaning familiarly on his shoulder, a naked girl, with wings on, stands cross-legged; she has a woolly head, and all the points of a third-rate Sydney barmaid in the old sub-letting days.

*Lord Rodney*.—Figure of Lord Rodney up in background. Angel standing on right, with hand thrown back towards Rodney's waistcoat, and dictating to angel on left, who sits with a book and pencil, and looks up at angel No. 1 as if to ask : " You surely don't want me to write down that ? " The whole suggests the designing of a new uniform on a tailor's dummy.

Lord Rodney wears the indignant and dignified expression of a local magnate who is stopped by a beggar in his own grounds. Sir Thomas Picton wears something more like a string of small sausages bunched up than a beard, and an expression of quiet annoyance. Others regard their angels with looks more or less pained and idiotic, though some of the expressions would be natural to men accosted by strange ladies wearing wings.

Now, let any intelligent Englishman who reads this go into St. Paul's and look at these groups, and decide as to whether the sculptors were impudent humbugs, or I'm one.

How contemptible this "art" would seem by the side of the statue of Burke and Wells (the Australian explorers) in Melbourne, or of Bobbie Burns in Ballarat—the statue with a twinkle in the eye ; or of a hundred others in Australia.

Talking of statues, there is often, from one point of view, an unforeseen effect which is not possible in pictures—a point of a cocked hat, for instance, which suggests a beak ; or a rapier sticking out behind and giving the figure a tail. There is, in the statue of Lord Nelson—on a tall column in Trafalgar Square—an effect which is greatly admired by the Americans who patronise Morley's Hotel, on the Strand side of the Square. There is a similar—or even more so—effect in the statue of Captain Cook in Sydney, seen from one point of view. It's strange that these things are never foreseen. The sculptors must have had a rough time amongst their friends.

The Misguide Book says : " Generally speaking, the monuments in the Cathedral are more interesting from personal associations than from great artistic merit, but some of the groups display vigorous action, and the likenesses are well preserved," &c. &c. You've read the same sort of stuff before. If the likenesses are preserved, then most of the heroes must have been born idiots. From my point of view, most of the statuary in St. Paul's is crude and—no, not theatrical—it doesn't even deserve that term. Reversing time, I

would say that it belongs to the concert-hall, living-picture school—the whole business has a concert-hally atmosphere. And I needn't have reversed time, either, for the sentiment of the British Empire of to-day is popular concert-hall sentiment. We can't get any lower, and that's some comfort.

When I look at a stone angel I mostly see a shallow-brained, soulless artist or sculptor's model in part of a sheet, and with a pair of wings. The stone angel business has been carried to a sickening extent in St. Paul's. If it were not so concert-hally, and thus beneath contempt, I would call it—well, Jack, I would call it blasphemy—and you know I'm no saint. To see everywhere crude angels in stone in senseless attendance on stone gods supposed to represent dead heroes who were only lucky to be leaders, who were no braver than thousands who fought under them, and some of whom were greater cowards in domestic life than the majority. As our friend, the shearer's cook at Come-by-Chance Station used to say, "There's more money and sympathy wasted over dead an' rotten humbugs than there is common justice done to straight, honest-living men." It's the way of all the world, and all time—Make gods of the dead! Crucify the living.

If a man's name cannot live in the history of a nation it cannot live in a stone idol.

Londoners admit that the statuary in St. Paul's is notoriously bad. Then why is it there? Why is it not broken up and buried, and something sensible put in its place? Or is it an object-lesson of the times when conceited, untalented humbugs, with nothing but "cheek" to recommend them, got by influence and court favour large sums of the public money for spoiling marble, while men who had the genius to put life and sense in stone were left to starve and eat their hearts out in garrets, or drink themselves to hell in wine-cellars?

There is no escape from a superstition called Wren, in London. Going round with my literary friend the other day, he pointed and said—

"Do you see that spire?"

"Yes."

"Perfect!—by Wren."

The spire looked all right—anyway I couldn't suggest any alterations on the spot. Looking at it later on I had to admit that it was beautiful.

By-and-by he pointed to another spire.

"See that spire?"

"Yes."

"Horrible—by So-and-So."

It did look ugly. After a while he pointed again.

"See that spire?"

"Yes."

"By Wren—perfect. Slightly different in design from the other."

There was a slight difference. Later on we came to Westminster Abbey.

"See that tower?"

"Yes."

"Restored by Wren. But" (he hesitated)—"but the top doesn't somehow seem——"

It didn't seem to fit the bottom. That's what he meant. But he was too much a Londoner, and too great a worshipper of Wren, to see where the trouble was. I think I saw it at once. Wren had simply taken the tops of four spires he had on hand and put one on each corner of the tower. If ever a pun was justified, Wren was an inspired man. He wasn't a tower man, and in restoring the Abbey he wasn't laying to his book. He was working on his reputation—or, maybe, he was hard up at the time.

I'll take you into Westminster Abbey when I'm in a more cheerful frame of mind.

HENRY LAWSON.

### COMRADE-GREETING

O COME you with a song?  
Here is bread to eat,  
And water in a pitcher  
To bathe your feet.

O come you with a song?  
Here is wine to drink,  
And there's my couch of heather  
Where you may lie and think.

O come you with a song?  
Take my staff when you go,  
My plaid for your covering,  
My flint for a glow.

*"I come with a song!"*  
Here's my hand for your need,  
My feet for your bidding,  
A kiss for your meed.

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

## THE BEST-BELOVED

## A DREAM-STORY

**I**T was a beautiful morning, and the Widow Floss paused in her weeding to look over towards the sea, which was the brightest of sapphire blues, and so clear and transparent that when one went nearer the sand and rocks could be seen quite clearly through its gently rippling waters. A party of children were bathing, and splashing one another, laughing in their glee. The widow sighed as she remembered the day, ten years before, when her husband, according to the old custom, had been wafted out to his last long sleep on the ebb-tide.

Eliz Pendennis came running up the little hill, with her apron to her eyes : she pushed open the widow's gate, and sobbed out—

"Poor Syl Clemence went out with the tide—oh dear, oh dear! Poor Syl!"

The widow dropped the bundle of weeds she held in her apron.

"Syl Clemence! gone out!"

"Yes, and they're—they're wanting you down there!"

"His poor mother!"

"Oh, his mother's in such a state! Oh dear! and he was such a strong, fine young man."

"Does Constance know?" asked the widow abruptly.

Eliz shook her head.

"No; I'm going to tell her. Oh, it is so sad!"

The widow was gazing strangely out to sea.

"Poor Constance!—and they were to have been married next week—and now it's the sea instead!"

There it rippled, clear and sapphire blue, the sea which was both bride and bridegroom—the great spouse and everlasting tomb of hundreds of men and women for generations past.

There was no cemetery in that little village. The sea was all in all to its inhabitants. As children, they played with it; as men, they derived their life and food from it; and it was their tomb when the end came.

"And now it is the sea instead!"

The widow's thoughts travelled back to that day, as grey as this was bright, when the sea dashed in a mist of spray against the rocks, and moaned as its waters dragged back from the earth to the ocean's heart. They had carried her husband up to the Place of Farewells, and she, by her privilege as his widow and best-beloved on earth, had wound the white grave-cloth about his beloved head. She had lingered about it, loath to bid farewell to him for ever; but the sea had roared and moaned for her right—had called out angrily for her prey.

And they had sent him out on the ebb-tide, lest his soul should be uneasy and not sleep in peace; and the sea had drawn him to her bosom—for ever.

Mechanically the widow pushed away the fallen leaves with her foot; she fastened under her chin the starched ribbons of her white cap, and without another word she started down towards the Clemences' cottage.

The door was open, and there were already several women in there: the widow went in.

Syl's old mother was sitting sobbing, surrounded by sympathetic women.

"Oh dear! Oh dearie me!" moaned the old woman. "And I can't even give him to the sea! I can't even put his soul to rest, my boy that I've rocked to sleep so many and many a time!—It's Constance who'll make him happy at the last. It's her he'll love for ever!"

"Constance—poor Constance—is his betrothed," said the widow. "He'll remember you always as his mother, and so kind to him here. Come, don't grieve so."

"Oh no! Oh no! I wanted to make him happy at the last! I'm his mother. I've slaved for him all my life—why can't I make him happy at the last?"

For it was believed by young and old that she who put the ring of seaweed on the finger of the dead, and gave him to the sea, covering his face, would earn his blessing, his love, his eternal gratitude for the gift of his soul's rest.

The widow went softly into the other room. Already the women had filled it with flowers and wreaths of seaweed, and had opened the window that looked over on to the ocean.

The embroidered sheet that was only used for such occasions, draped the low bed; and on it, with his face uncovered, lay Syl Clemence, simply clad in the long white linen shift that went from neck to feet.

His hands were decently composed, the right arm stretched at his side, the other bent over his bosom, as was the custom; wreaths of flowers and seaweed were strewn about the bed, which was bordered by Madonna lilies: and Syl lay very quiet, with a kind of smile on his lips—very restful, yet as though he were half-amused at something. Though his long black lashes rested closely on the white cheek, yet it gave one an impression that he was peeping underneath them.

The widow bent over him, still oppressed with the memory of that day when her husband had lain like this, in the self-same attitude: when she caught sight of little Isolt, the Widow Clemence's niece, an orphan, whom she had adopted.

The girl was sitting at the foot of the bed, her face white as the dead man's: and she did not turn her eyes from him for one instant. Presently one or two girls came into the room, very softly, and dropped

a tear and a flower upon the white sheet at the foot of the bed. The widow went out with them, and Isolt was left alone again with the dead.

In the next room they began to talk softly of Syl, and how good he was, and how beloved by all. No one could tell what he died of.

"Just as the tide was going out this morning," said his mother, "I heard him cry out; Isolt and I ran to his room at the same second, and there he sat, straight up in his bed, with his arms outstretched. When the girl ran in he called three times, 'Isolt! Isolt! Isolt!' and then fell back without a breath!"

She began sobbing again.

"And he was well last night?" asked the widow.

"Perfectly well," she answered. "And he and Isolt were whispering over on the sands just as ever; but I thought he looked a little pale when he came in. He had seemed a little depressed of late, I thought, ever since Constance named the day for next week. Yet they had been betrothed since they were children. Perhaps he had some presentiment of losing her at the last. And now——"

Widow Floss glanced towards the next room.

Poor little Isolt! Was it then that she grieved for her big brother so much?

The door opened and Constance came in, white and wild-eyed, followed by Eliz.

"It isn't true! say it isn't true!" she cried piteously. Then, seeing all the women there and the weeping mother, she bowed her head and was silent.

"Let me see him," she said quietly.

They opened the inner door and she went in and bent over him, and gazed at him thus for a long time without a tear or a moan. Then she sank down on her knees by the bed, and the others went out, all but Isolt, who had not moved.

The women in the outer room were silent, only saying something now and again in a whisper. At length the Widow Floss rose and went into the death-chamber. The two young girls had not moved.

"Hush, dear child! you must not grieve too much, or 'twill keep his soul back from the sea, and he can't rest."

Constance moaned.

"Hush, hush! he'll never rest if you wish him back! There, there now! I know, dear; but this afternoon, at the ebb-tide, you will give him to the sea—you yourself, and he'll love you for ever, and the time will come when you will follow him and meet him out beyond there!"

Constance gave a low cry.

"I can't give him to the sea! I can't! I can't! He's mine—mine, I tell you!"

"Oh, hush!" the widow shuddered. "When mine died, I said that too—it makes the sea angry. He went out in a storm. You

wouldn't have Syl go out in storm, dear? See how calm and blue the sea is! how well he'll rest with such a lovely calm!"

Isolt bent over, for the first time, and arranged a bit of seaweed at Syl's feet; her eyes never moved from his face.

The widow drew Constance, white and tearless, into the other room.

That afternoon eight of Syl Clemence's young friends met at the cottage. Syl was lying on a bier in his room, his face uncovered and a sheet thrown over him. The eight carried him silently through the four rooms of the little cottage, that he might bid them a last farewell. Then they carried him out into the open, and went in procession through every street of the village. The dead went first, with his white-garbed bearers crowned with seaweed; then followed the clergyman with the weeping mother and Constance—the latter following alone, all in white and veiled; and after them came the friends and most of the village people, accompanying him for the last time through their birthplace and their home before he left them for ever.

Isolt walked beside the bier; and her face was so white and her eyes so strange that none could say her nay.

Whenever they came to any spot which Syl had particularly loved, any place where he had been wont to play in his childhood, the bearers stopped a moment, and then went silently on. Constance wept; for they had played together as children. And Syl seemed to be looking at everything, stealthily, from under his lashes, and smiling in that quiet, mysterious, half-malicious way, as if he held some secret which they did not share.

And at last, when they had wound in and out of every narrow street, they climbed the hill, and came out on the Place of Farewells, which looks straight out upon the ocean.

Nothing could be seen but the clear blue of sea and sky; save, far away in the west, betwixt the two at the horizon, a faint, shimmering, silver streak—the island on which no human being ever had set foot; and where some fishermen, watching their nets at the time of the full moon, had seen (so ran the legend) the white spirits of the dead emerge silently from the shining waters, and dance till daybreak upon the shore, to the eternal singing of the billows; but it was said that all those who had seen them died within the year.

The water lapped gently against the horseshoe-like opening into which the dead are lowered. It was a wondrous blue, of a limpid transparency; but, however clear the water might be, either at ebb or flow, none could ever see to the bottom of the horseshoe; and some there were who said that it had no bottom, and never could be sounded.

The bier was put down on the trestle, draped with sea-green silk, which had been set there; and the clergyman read the first part of the burial service.

The Widow Floss watched the lapping wavelets. The tide was turning.

Then all the friends of the young man who lay so still there, came one by one and bade him a mute farewell, till they should join him on the gleaming Island of the Spirits. Some merely gazed at him with eyes which knew that they looked their last; some touched his hand, or softly pressed their lips to his cold brow.

And Syl seemed to be watching from under his lashes, and smiling "Good-bye."

The mother came and threw her arms about him with a bitter cry, and then stood silent, lest by lamentations she should keep his soul from its rest. Isolt stood silent by the head of the bier, her hands clasped before her.

The clergyman looked round and beckoned to Constance.

"Come, you that were his best-beloved on earth, come and bind his brow."

She had obeyed mechanically, and taken the white cloth into her hand, when Isolt threw herself forward with a wild cry.

"No, no! It is I! *I was his best-beloved!*"

They all gazed at her in wonderment, and she went on.

"He loved me best! Oh, indeed he loved me best! Only last night he said to me that he would rather die than marry any one but me. Oh, let me! let me!—Indeed, he loved me best! And if she gives him his soul's rest, he will love her best for ever! Oh, let me! let me!"

"Hush!" said the clergyman. "You are in the presence of the dead."

Isolt threw herself on her knees, clasping her hands.

"Ah! before Heaven I swear that he loved me best! *I was his best-beloved!*"

"Constance was his betrothed," said the clergyman solemnly. "They were to have been married next week. It is her privilege and her due. Go on, my child."

Constance, who had been gazing blankly at Isolt as though not understanding what she said, obeyed, and covered that face which none of them should ever see again in this world, if indeed she was his best-beloved, and he accepted the gift she gave him. Isolt knelt, sobbing: and then her sobs ceased suddenly, and she was still.

The bearers carried Syl to the water, and they lowered him, while Constance said the words that should give his body to the sea, and rest to his soul for ever.

"*I commit thy body to the deep—*"

But as she spoke the lapping waters of the fast-ebbing tide lifted the cloth from his face, and he seemed to be looking stealthily at them all; and smiled as though he was amused.

Afterwards, when they looked round for Isolt, she was not to be found, and none ever saw her in the village again.

But some there are who say that not one, but two souls went out on the ebb-tide that day to the ocean of Eternal Rest.

M. E. FINLAY.

## AN INDIAN GARDEN

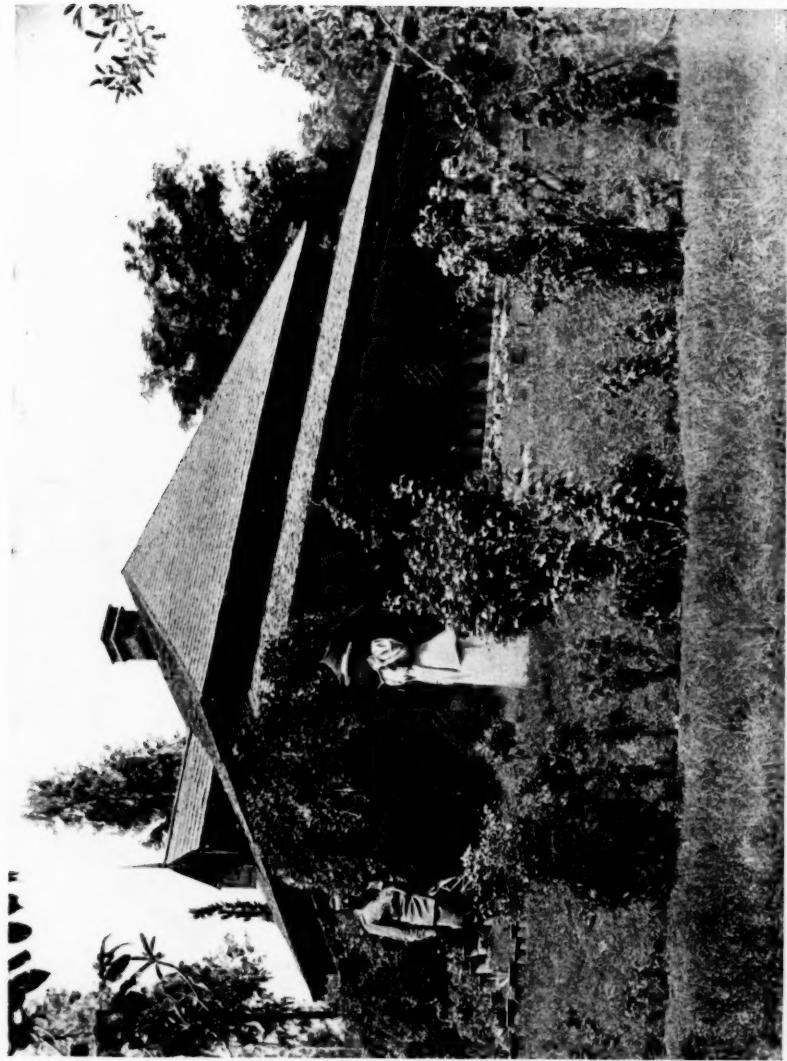
**A**N Indian garden—the words call up before the imagination a picture of glowing colour, tropical foliage, gaily-winged birds, insects flitting from flower to shrub, and above, the cloudless, deep blue sky and the steady glare of Eastern sunshine.

These gardens are certainly a delight to the eye and sense; but for how few hours of the day can the owner wander about enjoying the results of his labours, if, indeed, the results are in any way due to the work of his own hands. Far oftener the credit lies with the dark-skinned, scantily-clothed native gardener, who is better fitted to endure without discomfort the burning sun; while even he will take his siesta during the noonday heat. Thus, for the greater portion of the day the garden is shunned; and during the cooler hours of early morning or short evening twilight, it is wiser not to linger in the most enticing and shady spots, for the dreaded snake may lurk there, and then there is an end of perfect ease and safety.

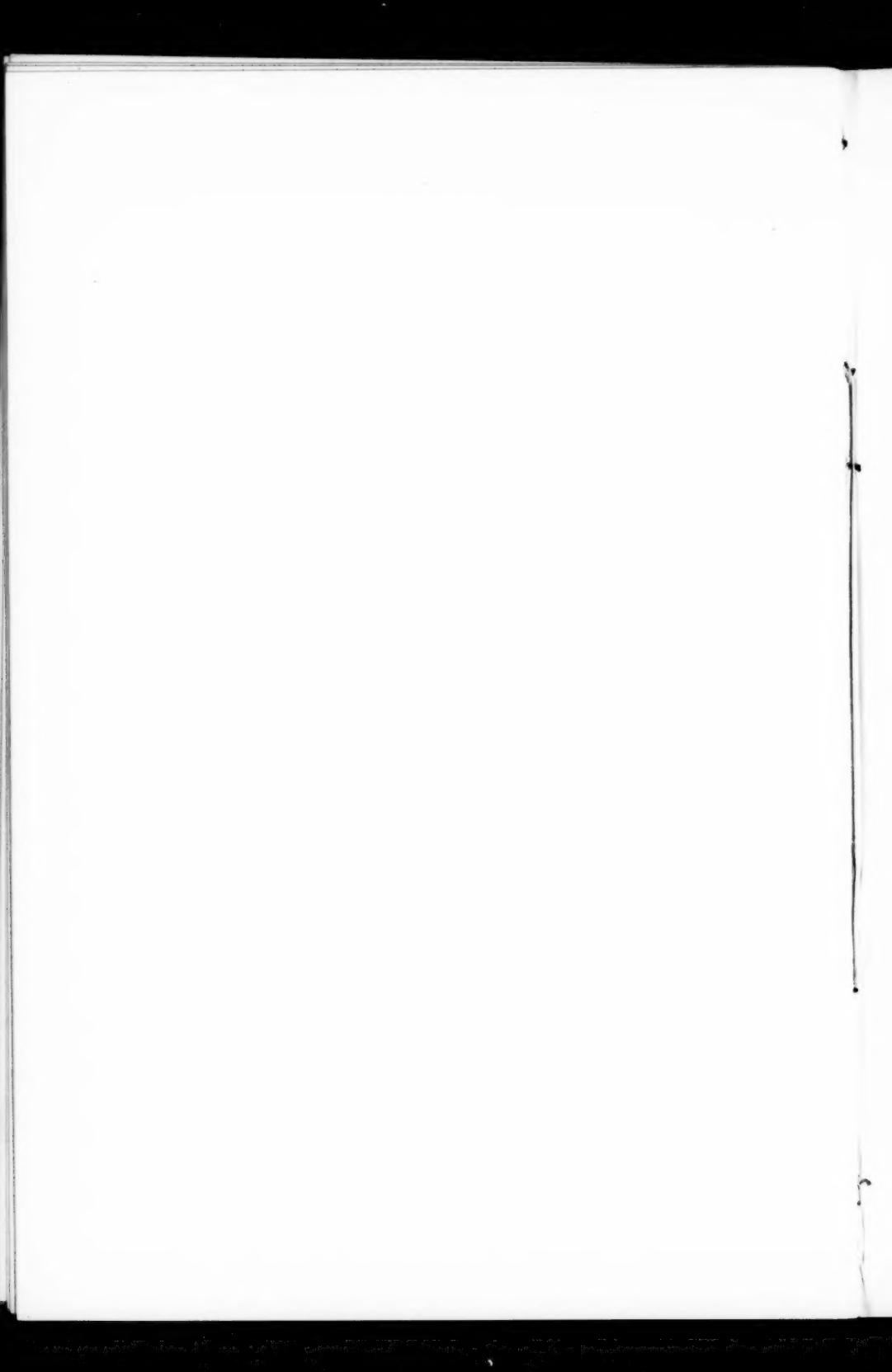
But all Indian gardens are not thus; and the object of those who pass many years of their lives in this far country is to attain as near an approach as may be to the gardens of their English homes.

For the creation of an English garden in India is the goal, or one of the goals, aimed at by those who find an abiding and soothing pleasure in the tending of flowers; and yet, perhaps greater results may be obtained than in the mother country. For English gardens lie dormant for many months in the cold grasp of winter, and even early spring is touched with ice; again, how proud are those who can induce tropical plants to flourish in England! Thus we come to the conclusion that our greatest friend is a climate which will allow both Eastern and Western vegetation to succeed. It was to such a place—a sub-Himalayan station—that, five years ago, one who loved flowers came to live.

The house, a pretty, low cottage, with wooden-tiled roof and wide verandahs, along which a few creepers had already established themselves, stood in some three acres of ground; a beautiful panorama of hills formed an inspiring background. During some months these hills are a golden brown, illumined by sunset reflection till the rich colouring glows into warm crimson, shaded with a rich fruity bloom, gradually deepening into purple, and from purple fading into cold, stern grey. At other times of the year they are a soft green, with dense violet shadows. At one dip between the hills rises the pure snow-capped peak of a distant mountain; while near by, divided only by a deep ravine from the garden, stretches a wide valley. At the



AN INDIAN GARDEN



time the new-comer stood surveying her home it was lying fallow, waiting after harvest for the plough and the patient tread of bullocks.

There were trees in the compound, and fine ones; eucalyptus, the blue gum and the iron, the wood of which is said to be unequalled in hardness; tall cypresses, always notes of admiration in any landscape; and many others—walnut, white poplar, ash, and Persian lilac, and the ever-welcome fir-tree.

It is difficult to take the reins in any new establishment, far harder when that establishment uses a foreign speech, and at first to enlist the gardener's energies seemed a well-nigh hopeless task. He insisted, for his forefathers had always done so, in believing that the best place to store unsown seeds was in his linen head-covering, thereby exposing them to alternate heat and damp, reducing their chances of germination to a minimum. When remonstrated with, however, he turned both his apparently deaf ears towards his employer, and came off conqueror. He used only the tools Nature had supplied him with, supplemented by a short piece of iron with a wooden handle called a "kurpi"; while his ideas of pruning were to produce in the rose-bushes a likeness to the bristles of a brush.

But after some months of apathy, stubborn distrust, and apparent deafness, he became at first interested, then believing, and finally quite quick of hearing. The seeds were relegated to a tin box, and his pride knew no limit when a spade, fork, shears, and pruning-knife, and, greatest treasure of all, a syringe, were confided to his care, to be used with a flourish in the face of neighbouring gardeners. Often, when working by the side of the strange lady, who would also prune and pot and weed with her own hands, he would stand lost in admiration of "our garden," and at what "we have done."

And so by degrees beds and paths were planned and cut. An arch here, an arbour there: while many cuttings were laid down behind the grateful shade of a hydrangea hedge, where cool droppings from the water-supply percolated to them.

Much had to be learnt of the ways of seeds and plants and the seasons in a new land; for the climate is a hybrid, and as yet no fitting guide-book has been compiled to suit its needs.

The first year, therefore, was one of patience and probation. But the mere enclosure grew into a garden; the cuttings took root and furnished a rose-garden; the shrubs spread out, and creepers twined; and although still far from perfection, it bids fair to rival any garden of a like age in England.

After this introduction I will marshal the procession of flowers through the circling months.

The year begins with little show, for the garden is taking its well-earned rest after the arduous labours of the glorious autumn; and yet, between the cold showers, it is worth while to visit the beds and borders, well-nigh empty though they be.

There are still some pansies and petunias left; a few dainty monthly

roses, their cheeks ruddier than when they bloom in spring-time, their petals hardier. There are also stocks and wallflowers, a few belated canna and chrysanthemums. But it is not for the welfare of the plants to be blooming when sleep is appointed for them, and so the garden-lover strolls around, scissors in hand, and shears them of their mis-timed flowers, proud the while of the nosegay culled on this Indian winter's day. It is none too soon, for rain and wind take possession of the garden the self-same night and wash and shake the trees. Old leaves fall to the ground, branches are cleansed and bathed, and one still cold night a clean white sheet is spread and tucked round root and twig. It is soon gently withdrawn, as the sun wakes all things with his tender kiss of spring, and one is aware of a subtle change in the now awakening world.

At this season it is hard to realise we are not in England, but on the Indian frontier, only thirty miles from that turbulent home of border tribes, known as the Black Mountain.

The first throbings of returning life and vigour are not characteristically Indian, as we count the word, though as the year advances our garden is often disturbed by the screaming flight of green parrots, or the curious note of the hoopoe and the flashing wing of the golden auriol.

But just in early March it is strangely suggestive of an early April day in England, with greater warmth of sunshine: witness the clumps of narcissus planted along the drive which are piercing the softened soil. Myriads of tiny wild yellow crocuses spring, mushroom-like, into sight, to be followed by their naturalised Dutch cousins of purple, white, and deeper yellow.

Then come more wild beauties. Slender pink and white tulips, which open their innocent golden hearts wide to the sun's wooing and fold them up in pink and crimson wings when he sinks behind the big purple hills.

We may gather hands full of these tulips from every roadside, but they boast no bulb, springing from seed every year.

There is a large pear-tree in front of the drive, which throws a protecting arm across the road, a wonderful sight in early March, with its delicate bunches of white-capped blossoms tumbling against rich copper-coloured leaves, the backs clothed with silvery down. The pink and white apple-blossom might vie with any English orchard. Quince and pear, and cherry too, are to be found in possession of the treble-terraced orchard, carpeted with the pink tulips. The pomegranate bushes as yet show only highly-polished foliage, but as June appears they will enhance that sober dress with the brilliant scarlet of their waxen blossoms.

The yellow berberry shrubs, prickly but charming, are fully out, also the yellow jasmine. The hedges are veiled in tender green, and the avenue of poplar trees along the road skirting the garden shimmers like silver against the blue sky.

And now, with full March sunshine, the garden bursts into flower. The verandah-steps are a blaze of velvet and gold-laced polyanthus ; yellow, pink, and white oxalis ; the latter reft from crevices in the rocky hill which towers some two thousand feet above the station.

Meanwhile from pots and boxes pansies of every hue and shade raise their little faces full of cheery interest. The new plants of ten-week stocks are filling the air with their old-world fragrance, while the violets, no longer modest, are putting their leaves to shame. Ah ! those violets, how welcome they are. They border the verandah like a purple ribbon, and run beyond the verandah and round the fourth wall of the house. They are planted in banks round the eucalyptus and apple trees, in pots or tubs, in fact wherever the sun will not touch them too roughly ; while in one especially cool, retired spot nestle the truly modest white ones. Every day they are gathered in great bunches and brought indoors, there to distil their sweet breath.

The whole house is filled with the scent of honeysuckle, for the entire front is covered by the clinging creeper, and it seems cruel to clip back the friendly hands stretching across the windows ; but it must be done, for in this sunny region the creepers lose the sense of moderation and propriety and fling themselves in wild profusion wherever they can gain a hold. The east corner of the verandah is guarded by the curiously knotted and twisted ash-grey coils of the wisteria, and already bunches of flowers hang like fairy grapes among the silvery leaves. Later on the foliage forms a dense mass of shade, and shelters many a cherished pot of ferns. It is also an ideal bower for the first meal of the day, and a secluded spot for the scanty slumber possible during the hot and heavy nights of June.

As March grows older the irises appear, and words seem poor and inadequate in which to sing their praises. Their colour is a heavenly blue or pearly grey-white, their scent of the sweetest; they grow not only in our favoured gardens, but in the most barren and poverty-stricken soils, and many miles away in the country the eye is caught by sweeps of heaven's own blue in the midst of brown fields or along the roadsides. They are often planted on graves ; but it is not from these sacred sepulchres, but from the banks and ravines about our gardens that we love to gather the irises in sheaves and armfuls, exhilarated by the freshness of early morning, when the blue and white mist still chastens the sun's ray.

As we return to the house laden with the spoil, the great maiden-hair baskets hanging at intervals along the verandah are refreshing balls of cool green. Their bullet heads were close-cropped some two months ago, but now exquisite fronds, curling and pink-tipped, are covering their baldness, and later the foliage droops on to the rows of geraniums in pots beneath. These geraniums will parade in scarlet ranks in another month, while the humble daisies from the grass-bank gaze at them like white-pinafored children staring at gallant soldiers. One compensation in a garden where the grass

is coarse and cannot be coaxed into the velvety sward of our English lawns, is that the daisies are allowed to survive. The severely truthful chronicler should frankly confess that the grass in her garden leaves much to be desired—that it is often brown and dry. But the roses call, for April's sunny face is shining—April all smiles and no tears—and we forget the uneven setting of grass as we hasten down to the rosery, visiting one sweet bush after another, and gaily cutting and cutting, for we know full well that for many days to come there will be no lack of blossoms.

If I have a secret preference among my roses it is for the golden Maréchal Niel, for their luxuriance is marvellous and they bloom from time to time throughout the year. The Maréchal Niel aims high, and there is a chestnut-tree in a neighbouring garden round which the rose has wound itself, hanging tempting golden flowers far above heads and even ladders of moderate height; and it is never seen to greater advantage than when it thus hangs above reach, and, gazing up, you realise what depths of mellow golden light its velvet petals can hold captive. In our garden this rose from four-year-old cuttings now covers two rustic arches, and blooms early and late.

La France is a wonder of silver pink, and a noble foil to the black crimson velvet attire of the Black Prince, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Camille de Rohan, and other rose röylalties. Where all are beautiful—pure white and lemon, rose and carmine, crimson and gold—description fails. It is enough to say that our rose-garden is a feast of colour and a profusion of bloom, and a deep satisfaction to one who has known the trees from cuttings upwards, and who, standing on this very site, despaired of ever having a garden—but that was five years since.

The April sun grows stronger, and the patient water-carriers are urged to rise earlier, and to deluge the roots of rose-bushes with water, one "mussack"<sup>1</sup> full each being none too great a draught to support them through the long blazing hours of noonday.

In the Indian garden the cry is ever "Water, water, and yet more water," certainly for nine months of the year in all but purely hill stations; and it is a distressing fact that too often, when most needed, the water-supply runs short, and grim engineers with their mighty keys of office lock up the main.

We have not yet quite exhausted the roses, for the corner of the house is a mass of pink-tinted apricot blossom—the Glory of Glazenvwood, though the old name of "Fortune's Yellow" is dearer to us. Hard by is a sweet yellow banksia in clusters round the verandah pillar, the other white banksia sisters are turning their arms and hiding their pale star-faces in the arbour at the foot of the rose-garden.

There is a rose which loves to cover the sad branches of dead trees, the Macartney, pure white, single-petalled, and golden-eyed. The old pear-tree in the rosery was doomed to the axe, when the scheme was

<sup>1</sup> Skin bag in which water is carried.

formed of clothing the poor skeleton with a garment of roses, not only a summer garment, but an abiding covering of dark green leaves; and now after the third year of patient growth the roses have nearly fulfilled their task, and next year the old tree will be a glory to the garden instead of a blemish.

Alas, and alack! the sun's heat becomes overpowering at last, and slowly and, sadly the roses droop their lovely heads, and drop their petals to the ground in silent showers, while others, braver, scorch and burn on the parent tree.

This is the time to leave our garden—it is better to fly for a week or two, and, among the wild hills, where spring has but just begun, wipe out regret.

But who having a home, and a garden, cares to stay long away? Who is not impatient to see how the garden will be looking?

The first half-sad glance at the rosery, so lately rich in splendour, is quickly diverted, and we stand delighted before a hedge of canna, which has sprung, after hot sun and copious watering, from two to six feet during our absence. Great fan-like leaves of green and bronze, and gorgeous spikes of every shade of scarlet and yellow, present indeed a fine spectacle. Two round beds of scarlet salvia near by are quite in keeping, but the glory of the garden lies now in the larkspurs. From the well-stocked beds they have overflowed on to the grass-plat, and form a delightful carpet of shifting colour beneath the walnut-tree.

The verbenas are spreading their many-coloured gems for our inspection, and in yet another bed there is a lovely tangle of sweet petunias, shading from purple to white, with touches of soft yellow evening primrose among them, while, notwithstanding the heat, many pansies still make a brave show; but is it wonderful that after three months' blooming the weight of their velvet gowns should drag them down?

Hollyhocks in tall clumps and herbaceous sunflowers make welcome splashes of colour, and a fine group of dahlias is the sure rendezvous of many a buzzing bee.

The delicate note of bloom struck by the roses may seem to have become harsher, but one cannot but be glad of the gay sight of escholtzias, many-coloured salpiglossis, and caleopsis, and, to make up for their lack of scent, the evening is perfumed by the irregular grey and white nicotine.

June waxes oppressive. Lack of wind and water are a privation to plants as well as to animals; and we live for the next six weeks much as the dwellers in the plains, passing our days for the most part indoors, cutting few flowers, for they fade almost as soon as gathered. Still, it is pleasant in the evening to sit out on the terrace and note the shrubs of pink and white oleander and cape jasmine, and rapid growth of the lemon-scented verbena, the dainty crêpe-tree, and datura with its white trumpets hanging silent, deutzias and bignonias and climbing clitoria. Soon the passion-flower will hang

its flaming fruit on the verandah trellis, for the flowers do not long brook the fever-heat of the sun.

"Fortune's Yellow" is a faded memory, but to take its place there is a fine solanum creeper, with refreshing bunches of snowy flowerets, and behind the house, to the north, clusters a tiny crêpe-pink china rose, a legacy from April.

It grows hotter, though the epithet of "very hot" is scoffed at by most of the true martyrs of the plains; but it is sufficiently hot to justify sleeping out under the stars, and to make the near approach of the rains the chief topic of languid conversation. The gardener's busy hours last month are now rewarded, for a fine show of balsams and Indian pinks console us for the vanished joys of amaryllis lilies, red and white.

A careless deed some weeks ago—a packet of seed spilt on the gravel—has met with reward instead of punishment, for there is a brilliant patch of portulaccas on the drive, opening their gaudy little cups to the sun they love, and, strange to say, these street arabs are finer than their carefully nurtured brethren, who are blooming in the places appointed to them.

Heavily scented tube-roses are blooming in thick lines, and are eclipsed by a gardenia bush. Zinnias, massed here and there, are pleasant touches of colour, if a little coarse.

The house-creeper, a tecoma, which for most of the year lashes the walls with long brown rods, is now covered with thick foliage and splendid bunches of orange-fingers.

Beds of day-lilies and complacent nasturtiums are also long-lived, but the morning glories are at last opening their beautiful steadfast blue eyes, and in great clusters accentuate each verandah pillar.

The handsome and fine-named *Mina lobata*, which has covered the arbour with little tongues of flame, will burn there harmlessly for the next two months.

Chrysanthemums are an anxiety for most of the year, increasingly so in June and July, and it is with heartfelt gratitude not only for their sakes, but also for the sake of the parching fields of Indian corn, that the terrific wind which ushers in the rain is welcomed.

The copper-tinted sky has grown murky and dust-laden, and a heavy oppression has brooded over us for many days, the hills being quite blotted out from view; but with the tremendous downpour comes immediate relief, and the plants can almost be heard sucking in the cooling draught.

The crops are saved, the springs filled, while in our garden the chrysanthemums lift up their drooping heads, the stunted aster-lings, just potted, shoot up into sturdy growth, and every man and beast and bird and plant is revived.

The noisy frogs lift grateful choruses from the pond close by, which is filled to overflowing, but we would gladly take their thanks for granted as they croak the live-long night. August and September

grow unpleasantly warm again for mankind, but the garden makes good use of the steamy atmosphere to push on with its work, for it has much to do before the year is spent. The rosery awakes from its prolonged lethargy, and the lovely reddish shoots and sprays rustle and whisper of roses in the future, and every plant and shrub makes fine fresh growth of limb. And so, with hot sun and fleeting storms, we pass on through September, which in its turn ushers in the glory of autumn—King Chrysanthemum.

First of all, the humbler subjects herald the later arrival of the rich and varied Japanese grandes, and the garden beds and borders blossom forth, and, with the waning days of September and the crisper entrance of October, the wonderful and varied glow of colour intensifies.

These garden chrysanthemums, after a little judicious checking in their early career, are allowed to grow as they list—the more the merrier; those finer ones in pots, like royalties, have to pay for their exalted position by the surrender of many a shoot and bud. The air is sweet with tonic, aromatic fragrance, and it is well worth one's while to follow the iris-walk through the little fir-copse which leads to the kitchen garden, for the overplus of chrysanthemums are each year planted there, and make bright borders for the sober cabbages and peas and other kitchen comforts.

A vegetable garden has its charms: many and varied shades of tender yellow and blue greens; beetroots, with their deep red leaves, and carrots of feathery head-dress, interspersed by fresh lettuce green, are not to be despised.

A trellis of tomatoes, the shining lobes of the fruit glowing through every shade of green to deep yellow and scarlet, are every whit as beautiful as the passion-flower at our door. And the grand grey-green serrated leaves of the artichoke are constantly massed in an earthen jar, as a summer truant for the fireplace.

Tall, feathery asparagus, just now covered with their red berries, often afford a steady support for the pink and purple convolvulus which have lost their way in the strange garden; they are sometimes brought into the house, as well as the lovely white pea-blossoms.

Returning, however, from the more prosaic part of the garden, we come upon a splendid raised border of true Japanese chrysanthemums, reflexed, incurved, anemone-flowered, and pompons; they form a veritable river of flame, bending this way and that under their weight of bloom, and the sloping bank which shores them up is a lattice-work of Macartney rose-foliage, the plain dark leaves relieving their mass of colour. Above them, held aloft, are the pure lambent torches of the white yuccas, alternated by mute aloes, their sharp weapons ready armed. By the second week of November the dozen dozen pots of choicer kinds are outlining verandah and drive. They are on the steps, and have even penetrated to the house, turning the sitting-rooms into bowers. Chrysanthemums seem to realise how we enjoy them,

and as if to repay us for the pain spent in preparing their path to the glory of bloom and colour, they do not hurry away, but day after day seem as perfect and flawless as ever, whether glowing under the sunshine of our delightful November and December days, or standing motionless and pale-tinted under the clear, fresh, moonlit nights. In this kindly mellow autumn many plants yield a second crop. Sweet peas, pansies, stocks, and wallflowers are only a few of the brilliant throng by which the waning year is surrounded.

Roses, too, are to be seen which, by their staying powers, compensate for their slender numbers. The leaves of many trees begin to turn scarlet and amber, and dropping, cover Mother Earth with a garment of warm russet brown, whilst the veitchii creeper paints one wall a brilliant crimson.

But the nights grow colder, the sunshine paler. Nature's nurses call the children of the garden and field to leave their pleasures and take their well-earned slumbers. The flowers, children-like, are loath to obey the stern summons, and linger and linger a little longer, a few of the bolder ones remaining until after Christmas: but now it is time to say farewell, for our garden sleeps.

FINETTA BRUCE.

### SONNET

#### A HARVEST OF SPRINGS

TOGETHER we have won the winds' consent ;  
I have no thought of you that's far from Spring  
In rainbowed valleys—from the blossoming  
Of blackthorn in the hedges, and the scent  
Of primrose hollows, when a shower is spent :  
Nor can I hear a thrush or blackbird sing,  
But straight to you my mind is on the wing ;  
Together we have wooed the woods' content.

With all Earth's op'ning buds this gladness grew—  
Grew with the flowers, that not a footfall knew  
Save yours and mine ; and now, your looks and words—  
Linked to the silences which fell between,  
Like shadows on our path, aslant its green—  
Live, with Spring's colours and the notes of birds.

E. H.

MASTER MAYNARD<sup>1</sup>

## I

**I**N the year 1550 there lived in the little country market-town of Otley, in Yorkshire, Master Allan Maynard, who had come there some five years before, bringing with him his housekeeper, Mistress Dalton, and her daughter Cecily. No one knew from whence they came, and nothing could be learned on this point from either master or servants. Master Maynard lived in simple fashion and had but few wants; for he was a recluse, spending his days, and for the matter of that the most part of his nights, in the laboratory or workshop which he had added to the small dwelling-house he rented. It may indeed be doubted whether he had greeted any man as a friend since his arrival, with the exception of his landlord, Squire Herrick, who rarely let a week pass without a visit.

He was a well-knit man of about forty summers, this Maynard, with a grave, handsome face; and although it was paled by study and his head was somewhat bent, many a maiden thought it shame that so proper a man should find his joy in books and learning alone.

He was a restless investigator and misinterpreter of nature; and the years that might profitably have been occupied in anticipating the discoveries of later generations had been given up by him to the pursuit of the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Life, and other quests of his day. His researches had gained him little but an evil reputation among his neighbours for a worker in sorcery; but side by side with these investigations he had laboured at mechanics with a great invention in view, and now at the end of long years of toil, and oftentimes seeming failure, the end was gained.

By the dying rays of the setting sun Master Allan Maynard bent over the curious engine he had fashioned. Never lover gloated over the charms of his mistress more tenderly, more enraptured, than did he. Each wheel, each cog, each chain, each bolt, bar and rivet told of long thought and anxious calculation, of patient labour and unremitting care: and now all was complete. Only the Promethean spark was required, and the engine would hiss and sputter, the wheels would turn, and oh, ye gods! it would work—work with the power almost of a man, at least it did so yestere'en before a rivet broke, and now that was mended it would be as strong as before.

With feverish impatience Master Maynard piled in the fuel and lighted it. How it burned! what a draught there was! and what a

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1901, in the United States of America, by Henry A. Hering.  
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belching forth of smoke! And the water in the stomach of the engine—listen to it seething, and now to the hiss of the escaping vapour! Ha! it was moving now, and as the rude piston slid in and out, and the wheels began to turn, the inventor waved his arms to and fro in the joyous excitement of the moment. He had fixed a winch to the engine, from which a rope went up across a beam in the ceiling and down on the other side to a bucket filled with stones. Now the winch turned, the rope creaked and tugged at the bucket, which with much reluctance was jerked slowly aloft.

Master Maynard was almost beside himself with joy. What power was his now! Here in this little shed he could do this, but outside with a larger engine what could not he do? He could lift great weights; he could haul—

There was a terrible crash, and through the latticed window a great stone was hurled. It fell with a sickening sound right in the midst of the tangle of wheels and chains, right into the very heart of the engine. In a moment the labour of years was a shapeless mass of ruins, while the water pouring into the fire below filled the room with scalding steam.

For an instant Master Maynard stood rooted to the ground by terrible emotions. Then with a fearful cry he seized hold of the first likely object that caught his eye—his stout oaken staff—intending to rush out upon the miscreant who had dealt the shameful blow to his handiwork. He flung open the door, and the moment he did so he was greeted with discordant yells by a crowd who had gathered outside.

“Conjuror!” “Wuzzard!” “Spawn of the Evil One!” were amongst the mildest epithets that were hurled at him; and then came a volley of stones.

Mad with pain and the agony of his thoughts, and not pausing to think of the fearful odds against him, Master Maynard rushed blindly at his adversaries, and those in the foremost rank quickly felt the force of his blows. With a sounding thud he brought Gaffer Walker, the dyer, to the ground, and another swept a stalwart cordwainer off his feet, while Master Bowyer's arms were made to smart for many a long day afterwards. But what did they count? Before he could recover his last sweep he was set upon by the yelling crowd; in another instant he was on the ground, pummelled, kicked, and cudgelled by the furious assailants, and it was going ill for the life of the unfortunate inventor.

Suddenly a clear voice rang out—

“Shame, shame upon you, ye pack of cowards!” and a slender figure in white burst through the throng and stood defiant beside the prostrate man.

It was a young girl of about twenty summers, her blue eyes flashing and her cheeks flushed with indignation.

For a moment the crowd was awed; but only for a moment.

"Come, come, Mistress Cecily," said one, "this is no woman's matter. Leave men to deal with such like as he."

"Men!" cried the indignant damsel. "Prithee show me them. A parcel of arrant cowards ye are to set upon a peaceable gentleman. You, Robert Hitchin, I warrant you would not be over anxious to meet Master Maynard in fair fight, though now you yelp bravely enow. And you, Reuben Fletcher, I am shamed of you. Have you forgotten your fair words so soon?"

Those enumerated by the girl looked foolish enough, and essayed to slink into the ranks behind; but those farther removed from her sarcasm growled loudly—

"Remove the wench. Take her away. What does she want mouthing it to us?" with other and broader speech.

One bolder than his fellows grabbed her round the waist. His hair and face bore the marks of her hands for long enough afterwards; but he clung on to her, and with assistance dragged her away uttering piercing cries.

During this diversion several energetic spirits had entered Master Maynard's workshop and completed their work of demolition. Not a single crucible was left unbroken, and the remains of the engine were hacked to pieces and thrown into the street. Having completed their savage work, they hastened back to the others.

"To the river! to the river with him!" they cried, and their mates were ready to take up the suggestion. Willing hands seized hold of Master Maynard's arms, and over the rough stones he was dragged by his captors, followed by the hoots and yells of the rest.

Suddenly silence fell upon the crowd, and the procession stopped.

A horseman barred the way—an old ruddy-faced man on a white mare; behind him a mounted servant.

"What's this, my masters?" said he. "Pretty goings-on for a law-abiding village. What means it? Have you captured some murderer?"

"Wuss than that, your worship," said one. "We've got a wuzzard."

"Pshaw!" said the horseman. "'Wuzzard,' indeed. Belike any man with more brains than your own poor noddles hold is a wizard to you. Who is he?"

There was a dead silence.

"Who is he, I ask?" repeated the rider sharply. "James Procter, answer me."

"Master Maynard," replied the other.

"Master Maynard!" cried the horseman, with great anxiety in his voice. "Heaven send you have done him no harm, or your necks shall answer for it"; and with these words he swung himself to the ground and made towards the centre of the throng.

While he had been speaking, those on the outskirts of the crowd had slunk away, with warning cries to their neighbours of "'Tis the Justice. 'Tis Squire Herrick." Now as he approached, the others

hastily fell back and turned tail, and by the time he was bending over the prostrate figure there were only the backs of the villagers to be seen.

"Cowards. Good-for-nothing vagabonds," muttered the Justice; and then catching sight of the pale and blood-covered face of the unconscious man he started back in horror.

"Quick, Jenkins," said he to his man. "Gallop your hardest to Master Birtwhistle, the leech, and bid him mount the mare. Tell him it's life or death. Quick, man! Every moment tells."

Squire Herrick knelt down beside his unconscious friend, and did what he could to stay the flow of blood from an ugly cut in his forehead by binding his handkerchief over it; then he loosed his doublet and cast about for water to revive him.

At this moment he was joined by the constable, who had judiciously remained in his house during the progress of the riot, but who now puffed up with bustling zeal.

"The devil's own work, your worship," said he, mopping his forehead.

"The devil take you, Lumkin, for a coward," said the Squire. "Here's murder going on, and you in bed, I doubt not. Don't answer me, you dolthead. Fetch some water."

With a quaking heart, the constable ran to do his bidding.

There was a clatter of hoofs, and the leech dismounted. He shook his head gravely as he stooped over Master Maynard. Then he placed his hand on his heart.

"He still lives, your worship," said he.

"Thank God!" uttered the Justice, with a deep sigh of relief. "I'd not have Master Maynard's blood upon my shoulders for much—a most worthy gentleman."

The constable had by this time returned, and under the leech's instructions Master Maynard was lifted between the four of them and borne to his home, some hundred yards away. The house-door was locked, with the key on the outside. They opened it and bore their burden in, stumbling as they did so over something on the ground. Light was procured, and loud were the Squire's oaths when Cecily was discovered on the floor, bound hand and foot, with a rag tied round her mouth.

"S blood," cried he, "they shall e'en pay dearly for this night's work. Murder and wanton outrage! 'Tis an Assize matter, I warrant me."

By the time they had unbound Cecily, and carried Master Maynard to his bedroom, Dame Dalton had returned in hot haste from some distant friend's house, where she had been told of the dreadful doings in her absence. Fierce were her denunciations of the cowardly assailants who could so maltreat an unoffending gentleman and simple maid.

## II

The most serious hurt done to Master Maynard was the fracture of a couple of ribs. Thanks to a vigorous constitution, when these had set again, when his wounds had healed, and his joints unstiffened, he would likely be none the worse for his severe handling. Meantime he lay a sorry sight on his bed, with his head plastered, each movement of his limbs causing pain.

Squire Herrick called daily to cheer the sufferer, and ascertain what progress he was making. On calmer thoughts, the worthy Justice did not deem it wise to take any action against his friend's assailants. He himself, thanks to an unusually liberal education, much travel, and sound common-sense, did not believe in witchcraft and sorcery ; but his brother Justices did, and it might be difficult to prove to their satisfaction that Master Maynard was an honest man and no trafficker in the black art. Better by far let the villagers remain in uneasy suspense than have them summoned and acquitted ; in which case Master Maynard's position would be even worse than before. So he contented himself with passing scowling through the village, not noticing the salutations which were accorded him, and for many a long day did its inhabitants rue the raid they had made upon Master Maynard's house. In the natural course of things they nearly all appeared in their turn—yearly, quarterly, monthly, or weekly—before the Squire for drunkenness, the use of bad language, non-attendance at church, and the like ; and justice was dealt out with an exceeding hard hand in the following months.

But the Squire did not bring Master Maynard his only consolation. Fair Mistress Cecily was installed as nurse, and never had sufferer one more devoted and attentive.

Her father had once on a day been a parish clerk, and had a fair knowledge of his letters ; and this he had imparted to his daughter, who had improved upon it until she could read with some fluency and little hesitation, save over the longer and more uncommon words. So she sat by the bedside of the sufferer and read to him for many hours each day such instructing volumes as he chose.

It was a novel experience for the stern, cold, self-contained man on the bed, but it was a pleasing one ; and despite his sores and aches it was long since his face had worn so calm and happy a look as when he was listening to the sweet voice at his side. Ofttimes he heard more of the voice than of the meaning of the words, and he would be following its cadence or sweet monotone when he ought to have been attending to the wisdom it expressed. He had scarcely been more than conscious of her existence until that eventful evening when, hurt, prostrate on the ground, and surrounded by his enemies, he had heard her voice ring out on his behalf, and had seen her stand defiant beside him ; but now he wondered in a vague sort of way how he could have

been so long unmindful of what had been growing up to beautiful womanhood under his very eyes. Then with a sudden expression of impatience he would strive to attend to the text she was reading; but before long he was thinking of golden hair, blue eyes, velvet cheeks, and soft voice in a manner astonishing in so learned and austere a man.

As for Cecily, she was conscious of no change in her feelings, for had not Master Maynard seemed all along to her the most god-like man she had ever seen, a man for whom a maiden might well have died, had needs be?

But it was not alone with reading that the time was passed. Maynard encouraged Cecily to talk—especially of herself: and he himself grew communicative, and much to Cecily's pride, would say something of his hopes and intentions for the future.

"This is the second time, Cecily," he once said, "that my plans have been frustrated by ignorant yokels, and it shall be the last. I needs must stay here for another year, as my poor purse would not allow of travel before; but when we do move, it shall be to some spot far away from neighbours."

"And what will you do until then, sir?"

"Do?" laughed Maynard, "I have plenty to do. It will be weeks—maybe months—before my workshop is in order again, and my tools and instruments replaced. Then will I bestir myself with the various investigations that occupied me of old. The Philosopher's Stone is yet to find, Cecily. So long as that remains undiscovered, there needs be no leisure for such as I."

In another month or so Master Maynard was out and about again; and before the summer was over he was as busy as ever over his retorts and crucibles, mingling strange fluids and producing pungent odours. Sometimes Cecily ventured in on one pretext or another, and Maynard was ever ready to show with what he was occupied, and to explain its purport.

One day she found her master bending over an alembic containing a rich red liquid, which glistened in the sunshine, showing golden streaks.

"Ah!" he laughed, "here's something that will interest you mightily, Cecily. Here's what many a maiden would give her ears to have."

"And what may it be, sir?"

"A love potion, Cecily, composed after the receipt of my old master, Andrew Gordon. This brave fluid dancing in the sunlight has most potent powers. He who drinks of it commands the love of the first dame or damsel he meets. 'Tis a wondrous potion, Cecily."

"And will it act the same with maidens, sir?" said Cecily eagerly.

"Of a surety. Any maid who drinks of it may have the lover of her choice an she will."

Cecily stood looking out of the window, her bosom heaving and her

cheeks flushed. Her lips moved, but the words would not come. At length she burst forth—

"Master, may I drink of it?"

Maynard started, and a shadow passed over his face.

"And you wish it, Cecily? It grieves me you should wish to leave us, but 'tis only natural. Who is it you wish to ensnare—Roger Bertram or Harry Ingle? Nay, it matters not. Yet I should have thought your fair face needed no aid to command his love."

Cecily's cheeks were burning now, and her eyes filled with indignant tears.

"Nay, Master Maynard, 'tis none of those," she answered, with a proud toss of her head.

"Well, well, it matters not. I am sorry, Cecily, but selfishly so. You have made yourself so helpful to me since that night when, it may be, you saved my life, that I shall miss you sorely," and Master Maynard's voice seemed exceeding sad.

Cecily's face had cleared. Her eyes sparkled and her lips moved joyously.

"Let me drink, master," she said.

"Nay, nay, child; be not over hasty. You must make sure the man you love is at hand. It would be ill did you look upon another face before his."

"Let me drink," she replied. "He is at hand."

"Then take this to your room," said Maynard, pouring out some quantity of the fluid. "Drink this straight off, and the first man you see after the lapse of some five minutes or so, be he old or young, rich or poor, must needs love you till the end of his days, and count you as the sweetest and dearest woman the world contains."

As the girl's hands closed eagerly over the phial, Maynard looked at her with strange graveness. His sorrow seemed to have increased with her joy. He followed her to the door with his eyes, and as it closed he sighed and commenced to pace the room.

About a quarter of an hour afterwards the door opened, so gently that Master Maynard heard it not but continued his distressful walk. Suddenly he stopped and stared at Cecily, who stood before him blushing the rose's crimson.

"Well, child, so you have seen him?" he said with a soulless smile.

"I have seen no one," she replied.

Involuntarily Maynard placed his hands before his eyes to shut out the sight of her; and as he did so the roses faded from her cheeks and the lips trembled.

"Child, child," said he, "hast thou drunk of it?"

"Yes, master."

"And am I the first man thou hast seen?"

"Indeed thou art."

"Thou foolish child, hast forgotten its magic spell? Why, I have gazed upon thee."

"Well, master," a voice trembled.

"And needs must love you."

There was an instant's pause.

"Is that so terrible?" she murmured.

Allan Maynard withdrew his hands from his eyes and looked at her; and as he looked a great eagerness came into his face.

"Dost mean it, Cecily?" he whispered hoarsely, as he came nearer and caught her hand. "Child, the potion works. I love you! I love you!"

The trembling maiden did not speak; he drew her to him and held her to his heart.

"Master Maynard! Master Maynard!" exclaimed an astonished voice, and, looking guiltily around, the pair saw Squire Herrick standing in the doorway.

"A man of your grave years to be philandering thus is unseemly indeed," continued the Justice.

"Nay, Squire," replied Maynard, "I have but proved the value of an old formula. It worked marvellously well and hath gained me a winsome wife."

Some days afterwards, when Master Maynard was sitting with Cecily by his side, he suddenly stopped in his discourse.

"'Tis passing strange, sweetheart," said he; "I must have drunk of the potion myself, but I have no knowledge of it."

"And why must you have drunk of it?" she asked demurely.

"Why? To have gained your love."

"Oh, you foolish-wise Master Maynard," said she, holding his hands to her lips, "you have had that for many a long day. My love needed no potion—only yours."

HENRY A. HERING.

## PIDGIN-ENGLISH

VERY amusing is the "English as she is spoke," which has been originated by the natives of China, and used in their intercourse with the English and American merchants and skippers who frequent the seaports of the Celestial Empire, a dialect also extensively spoken, with local variations, in the coast towns of the Straits Settlements. It is known as Pidgin-English, is of limited extent and vocabulary, and not unlike in its origin to the mixture of languages known as Lingua-franca in the Levant and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Mercantile transactions of every kind between Chinese and English-speaking "barbarians" are carried on in Pidgin, and many natives learn it with the purpose of becoming servants to the foreign merchants and others who settle in their country; and though, of late years, many Chinese are learning to speak English quite correctly, there is no question but that this curious dialect will retain its popular use for a long time to come. Pidgin is generally supposed to be derived from a series of changes on the word *Business*, which, being first contracted to *Busin*, then through the form of *Pishin*, latterly assumed that of *Pidgin*, and, while always retaining its original meaning, there seems now little chance of its dying out. It is even taught to some extent in schools, and it is no uncommon thing to hear two Chinamen from distant and different parts of their own country conversing together in Pidgin, their own proper dialect being unknown the one to the other.

A final *ey* is very common in this patois, as *talkey*, *walkey*, and *catchey*. To have, or be connected with, is expressed by "belongey"; if you wish to intimate that a certain thing is not yours you say, "That no belongey me"; or that you have no connection with some business or transaction, "That no belongey my pidgin." To ask a Chinaman if he can do a certain act, the question is, "Can do? No can do?" "Piecey" is a word greatly in use, and has been derived from the commercial language which speaks of a piece of goods; but with the coolie everything is a piecey, and he does not say "one man," but "one piecey man," while a missionary is termed a "Number-one-go-to-Heaven-man." "Secure," is used for guarantee or promise; "maskee," a very common Pidgin word, is "never mind" or "in spite of"; and "bobbery" or "bobbely" means disturbance or trouble, as "Why did you leave your last master?" "He too muchee bobbery mi." "What is that?" becomes "That blong what thing?" and "Who is that?" is "That blong who man?"

It is difficult for a Chinaman to master the English pronunciation,

and this accounts in great measure for the prevalence of Pidgin. Our letter *d* is not easy for the natives, while *r* is almost invariably sounded like *l*, and thus we have *ki-lin* or *kleen* for green and *lain* for rain. Curiously enough, in Japan the letter *l* is a similar difficulty with the natives there, as Sir Edwin Arnold tells us in his "Seas and Land;" they could not pronounce his name properly because that letter appears in it. In this book the author gives some instances of Pidgin gathered from experience with the Chinese servants and stewards on board a steamer crossing the Pacific from California to Japan, on which were also a number of sick and ailing Celestials returning to end their days in their native land, for which they have a strong desire. There were besides on board the bodies of several Chinamen who had died at San Francisco; but these Pacific steamers are quite accustomed to accept and transmit such rather uncomfortable freights at, of course, considerable charges, and generally ship them under the entry of "fish-bones." Always cheerful, willing, and industrious, the Chinese stewards got through their never-ending task of feeding and serving the passengers with an unchanging complacency; and Sir Edwin's particular attendant, Ah-Fat, afforded him special and endless amusement with his views of land-and-sea life expressed in Pidgin English. "No makee laining, sun sine, plenty muchee good walkee topside ship," was his method of announcing good weather and recommending exercise on deck. Preparing to extinguish the lamp he would suggest, "No wantchee see now"; and when asked why so many of his countrymen came on board sick, and even at point of death, Ah-Fat murmured the explanation, "Plenty you, perhaps, savey, but no savey bottom-side Chinaman mind. My very sick, more better kill board ship than kill San Francisco. Suppose my killed board ship, my put one piecey bokkus (coffin), all nice, go China cheap." Another morning Ah-Fat more lucidly explained the consuming desire of his countrymen to have their remains laid in their native land, if they could not reach it alive. "That number-one piecey God-pidgin!" he softly pointed out; "suppose wantchee go topside after kill, then wantchee family make chin-chin joss at grave. Suppose no takee bones, no makee grave, no speakee chin-chin joss, then not belong topside at all after kill, belong hellee." In other words, great value is attached by the Chinese to the prayers and offices of children for parents, and such prayers must be uttered in presence of the dead man's relics, or at the spot where they rest. To "chin-chin joss," as mentioned here, is to worship God; to "chin-chin" a person is to salute him.

A hot-tempered German merchant in Hong-Kong having detected his Chinese servant in some petty larceny, called him into his room and said, "Boy, I'm going to give you a jolly good hiding. Lock the door." The boy, with a calm Buddha-like serenity, answered not a word but locked the door. In a case like this, a Chinaman would very generally grovel on the floor and beg for mercy, but not so this

one, who was an active young fellow of about twenty-five. The German took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves—Johnny did the same. This rather puzzled the merchant, who advanced towards him bending a supple-jack in his hands. Instantly Johnny threw himself into the most approved British posture of defence—left leg and arm advanced, right arm covering the upper part of the body, weight resting on the right foot. The merchant recoiled at this unheard-of attitude of a Chinese boy, and called him every name he could think of; but Johnny simply said, "Now, sir, you talkee you give my number-one good hiding; you allus hide me. This time I secure I hide you." And suiting the action to the word, he gave his master such a thrashing as no European ever received from a Chinaman, and quietly unlocking the door, wished him "chin-chin," and left him sprawling on the floor with a pair of black eyes. It turned out that Johnny had been a steward on board a P. and O. steamer, and had picked up the noble art on his voyages.

In "Meeting the Sun" we are told that on the author's arrival in China he got a native servant, and it being usual there to breakfast about twelve o'clock, it is the custom to have some tea, toast, and egg served in your bedroom when you get up and before dressing. The first morning he expressed his wishes on this matter in the usual way, and the boy went off smiling, as if he understood his meaning, but did not come back, and the anthor made some inquiries at his friends in the house. They asked what he had said, and the words were repeated to the effect that he would like some breakfast, and wanted it immediately. He was then told he might as well have talked Greek, and that he ought to have said, "Catchee some chow-chow chop-chop." "Chow-chow" is understood in this case as something to eat, and "chop-chop" is equivalent to "quick-quick." Another traveller relates that when journeying with a Chinese guide who refused to enter a certain village where there was a strong prejudice against foreigners, he pleadingly excused himself by saying—"that villagee too muchee dirty, my no likee walkee."

For another example of the readiness of Chinese servants there is the following anecdote. A very foppish young officer of one of the British regiments stationed in the East called one day upon a friend who was by no means blessed with a superabundance of the good things of this world. According to custom, the visitor was asked what he would take to drink, the host fancying it would be a glass of beer; but the visitor preferring wine, the merchant called his boy, and said, "Go catchee some hock and seltzer for this gentleman." The boy went out, and presently returned with it. After the officer had gone, the question was asked, "What side you catchee that hock and seltzer?" The fellow grinned from ear to ear, and said, "Oh, that blong easy, sir. I have one piecee friend there at number seventy-eight, I makee lend him knives and forks last night, he makee lend my hock and seltzer to-day: that blong easy, sir."

One little Cantonese servant with a recently arrived English lady, on being asked if he understood what his mistress said, replied, "I no savey, missussi talkee plopa English," meaning of course that she did not talk Pidgin. This same lady was at a dinner-party at a mandarin's house, when another guest asked the servant regarding one of the dishes on the table, "What fashion chow-chow this thing?" The reply was not very appetising for the lady: "Hai-ya! blong one piecee dog!" A boy who went a coast trip with a convalescent gentleman of bibulous habits, said on the return of his master that "Number-one day he chow-chow some tiffin; number-two day he chow-chow some dinner; number-three day plenty samshoo (native spirits), largee laugho!" A merchant desiring to send six pots of Chyloon ginger to England gives his orders in this way—"Comprador, I wantchee you catchee my six pots, number-one Chyloon ginger to send that England side." Another gentleman saw his boy trying to mount a pony and several times thrown. Seeing his master looking, the boy said, "Mi wantchee go topside he; he wantchee go topside mi."

As a convenient and useful dialect, and a medium for the intercourse between foreigner and Chinese, aiding in the transaction of a large import and export trade, Pidgin will no doubt hold its place for a long time to come. It is easily picked up by the common and shore-bordering working-class, and a good knowledge of it is of much assistance in the difficult task of learning Chinese proper. There are now versions of several common English songs in Pidgin, and here is introduced "Dis velly good sing-song," being a version of an old nursery rhyme:—

"Singee songee sick a pence,  
Pockee muchee lye ; [rye]  
Dozen two time blackee bird  
Cooked in e pie.  
When him cutee topside  
Birdie bobbery sing ;  
Himee tinkee nicee dish  
Setee foree King.  
  
Kingee in a talkee loom [room]  
Countee muchee money ;  
Queenee in e kitchee,  
Chew-chee breadee honey.  
Servant-gilo shakee,  
Hangee washee clothes ;  
Chop-chop comee blackee bird,  
Nipee off her nose."

To English-speaking people it will seem a fearful thing to have a translation of Milton or of Shakespeare into Pidgin, and one can fancy the feeling with which the soliloquy would be listened to when "To be or not to be" was begun with "Can, no can." There is, however, a famous passage from Home's "Douglas" in existence, beginning—

"My name belongey Norval, topside-galow that Grampian hill  
My father catchee chow-chow for him piecey sheep," &c.

The word galow, g'low, or galaw has no particular meaning in itself, and is merely used as an intensifying and exclamatory word, and as such is adopted in the following Pidgin version of "Excelsior," which first appeared in "Meeting the Sun"—

That nightey-time begin chop-chop,  
One young man walkey—no can stop.  
Maskee snow ! maskee ice !  
He cally flag with chop so nice—  
"Topside-galow!"

He muchee solly, one piecey eye  
Looksee sharp—so—all-same my.  
He talkey largey—talkey st/ong,  
Too muchey curio—all—same gong—  
"Topside-galow!"

Inside house him can see light,  
And eve/y loom got fire all light,  
He lookee plenty ice more high,  
Inside him mouth he plenty c/y,  
"Topside-galow!"

Olo man talkey, "No can walk,  
By'm-by /ain come—we/y dark,  
Hab got water, we/y wide."  
"Maskey ! my must go topside—  
Topside-galow!"

"Man-man," one girley talkey he,  
"What for you go topside looksee ?"  
And some time more he plenty c/y,  
But all time walkey plenty high—  
"Topside-galow!"

"Take care, that spoil'um t/ee, young man !  
Take care that ice. He won't, man-man."  
That coolie chin-chin he "Good-night !"  
He talkey, "My can go all light."  
"Topside-galow."

Joss-pidgin man he soon begin  
Morning-time that Joss chin-chin,  
He no man see—him plenty fear,  
Cos some man talkey—he can hear !  
"Topside-galow!"

That young man die, one large dog see  
Too muchey bobbely findey he :  
His hand blong colo—all-same ice,  
Hab got flag with chop so nice,  
"Topside-galow!"

#### MORAL—PIDGIN.

You too muchey laugh ! What for sing ?  
I tink so you no savey what ting !  
Supposey you no blong clever inside,  
More betta *you* go walk topside !  
"Topside-galow!"

WM. T. DOBSON.

## LITTLE COMRADE

(BEING FRAGMENTS FROM THE DIARY OF PIERRE DUBOIS)

JUST then I caught sight of the figure of a lad seated by the way-side of the long, deserted road. He was stooping over his foot, and as I came forward, eager to greet another wayfarer, whoever he might be, I saw the gleam of bare flesh and a faint smear of blood.

"A cut foot, eh, comrade?" I inquired.

He had imagined himself alone; when my voice struck upon his ear he started violently, and the outline of his averted cheek—as softly delicate as any girl's—became suffused with colour.

"It is nothing—nothing, I thank you, monsieur," he stammered, giving me a startled glance out of a pair of thickly-fringed grey eyes.

I threw myself on the grass by his side, glad of an excuse for a brief rest. "I should know something of cuts," I said; "let me see your foot."

He had hidden it in the long grass, and was drawing away from me with a look of fear; but I caught the foot—not too roughly, I trust—in my hand.

Then our eyes met, and mine were startled now. I looked from the tiny shapely foot to the small delicate brown hands. My eyes lingered on the short curly hair and wandered over the slight figure.

"You are a girl," I said accusingly.

"And if I am, what then?" she returned with defiance, drawing her foot out of my hand and once more hiding it in the grass. "What then, monsieur?"

"Oh—nothing," I said stupidly.

She looked into my face with a sudden trusting glance. "You will keep my secret?" she asked pleadingly.

"That I will, on the honour of a soldier of France," I replied. "Only you will let me bind up your foot?"

I took the poor cut foot in my hand without waiting for assent, and bound it up with all the gentleness my rough fingers knew.

"You are very kind," she said gratefully. "What is your name, monsieur soldier, for I see you wear the uniform of our army?"

I glanced at my soiled clothes with discontent. How I wished they still retained the splendour of three months ago! I had been a credit to my company then; had not my captain himself told me so? God rest his soul in his bloody soldier's grave! But since those field-days I had been in many fierce engagements—engagements, alas! in which the honours did not lie with France! And my uniform was slit in many places, while the gay colours had faded.

"My name is Pierre Dubois," I answered, "but my comrades call me 'Crow.'"

For my jet-black eyes and hair had earned me that sobriquet almost in my cradle, and it had stuck to me ever since, as these things do.

"I see," she said.

I waited for her to tell me of herself, but when she did not speak, only sat looking thoughtfully in front of her, I went on. "I was wounded in the last battle and sent home, but now I am well again, and tramping to join my company. 'Tis said the Prussians are marching to Sedan, and that there is to be a great battle. The saints grant I get there in time! But it is a long way, and as, alas! I have no money for my journey, I must walk."

"We are in like case, then," she answered quickly; "neither have I any money, and I too must reach Sedan. My home is there, monsieur, though the last two years I have lived with my grandmother in St. Yrieux; but she is dead now, and there is no place for me anywhere save in my father's cottage outside Sedan. He too is of the army; he does not know of granny's death, or that I have started to go to him. Is it very far, monsieur? I did not think walking would tire me so. I left St. Yrieux yesterday."

"Have you walked all that way, mademoiselle?" I exclaimed amazed. "Surely it is not possible; it is a man's march! Do you know Sedan is ten days from here?"

Her face fell, but brightened almost immediately. "I can do it," she said bravely.

"Alone!" I murmured, appalled. "You forget the risks you run—the great distance—danger—the heat—the disturbed state of France. Nay, it is not possible! Turn back now to St. Yrieux. Surely there is some one there to give you shelter till the war is over, and your father able to see to your safety. For a man it is perilous enough, but for a maid!"

"You forget," she pointed to her boy's attire with a faint blush, "I am just a village lad: who would harm me? That was why I dressed myself so and cut off all my hair, such coils and coils, monsieur." She sighed. "I am strong, I can walk far."

"Yet your foot is cut already, and the first man you meet reads the truth through your boy's clothes."

"No one else noticed," she said uneasily.

"Bah! They were fools!" I retorted. "'Tis plain enough. You will go back!"

"Never!" she cried vehemently. "No, monsieur, I am not of those that turn back."

I was silent, thinking deeply. "You shall not go alone, unprotected; we will go together, you and I: you shall be my little comrade if you will, mademoiselle," I said at length.

She gave me one long intent look. I was glad that I could meet

her scrutiny without flinching. "I shall hinder you," she faltered, and I knew that I should have my way.

And what a brave cheerful little comrade was Marie Proisson!

Perhaps strictly speaking she was not beautiful, but her face had become the fairest in the world to me before that first day's journey ended. Her eyes—a quiet grey till they lit up with animation, and became changing sparkling depths : her hair—just brown, till the sun chancing upon it turned it to sunbeams of red and gold. Her features—well, they might be irregular, but her colouring was exquisitely pale and clear. Not many men, I think, would have passed my Little Comrade by unnoticed.

Day after day we marched together : our clothing grew more soiled and worn, our faces thin ; to those that passed us on the way we must have seemed like vagabonds, and never a word of complaint from my delicate fellow-traveller. If my strong frame was often on the point of dropping with fatigue, what must hers have endured ? Yet she was never too tired for a smile, a bright word, but always too tired to listen when my tongue would begin to stammer and to falter something of the love making that toilsome march a thing of joy.

Often at night I could get no shelter for her, and wrapping her up in my torn cloak I could make but a sorry resting-place for her by the wayside. I could hear her regular breathing only a few feet away, while she slept the deep dreamless sleep of physical exhaustion under the sky. As for me, it was often late before Nature, against my will, closed my eyelids ; my gaze would be fastened upon that little still figure, and eloquent words of love would come to me *then* ; but on the morrow, or if by chance she stirred, and waking called to know if I slept, my eloquence would die away unuttered, my stupid tongue become more halting than ever.

Such a compassionate large-hearted Little Comrade ! She would hear no word even against our enemies. "Some of them are good and brave, I know," she would declare vehemently, looking beautiful with the flush excitement brought to her cheek ; but when I teased her to tell me how *she* knew, she would only look wise and say nothing.

The scorching heat of those white dusty roads seemed to sap the vitality of Little Comrade, but still she struggled on, no man's spirit more dauntless than hers. And then came the pinch of poverty, the scarcity of bread. Little Comrade's face grew white and thin, her frail form frailer, and I, with a heart that was nigh to breaking, could do nothing.

To me the war of twice ten nations would not have been worth the tired droop of my little companion's figure, yet men have called me a good soldier, and I have medals at home won in many a hard-fought fight.

It was because I felt so much I said so little.

Was I glad, was I sorry, when at last we came within reach of Sedan? Both, I think. Glad that there would be rest for my weary Little Comrade at last, but more sorry than my faltering tongue could say that now must come the parting of our ways.

For want of her merry "Bonsoir, Pierrot!" as Little Comrade curled herself up to sleep, I should lie awake longer than is wise for a soldier on the eve of a great battle.

Rumour had not exaggerated; the Prussians were drawn up ready for attack a short distance from our own army. How glad I was I had got there in time! Not for worlds would I have missed the great French victory when we would drive the Prussians like sheep before us. Well, I would be a merciful victor for the sake of my Little Comrade; and after the war—who knows, perhaps my tongue would do me better service then.

The parting I dreaded was not to be so soon, or in the manner I had thought, for the Prussians lay between Little Comrade and her home with its golden harvest-fields laid desolate. She was taken to her father, who was in the third troop, and only he and I knew the secret of her sex.

It was growing dusk, and we stood together; she was staring eagerly at the enemy's camp, but I was looking only at her.

"Do you know the name of any of the Prussian soldiers, Pierre?" she asked suddenly.

I shook my head. "But how should I?" I said, astonished.

"There was a Prussian once," she said dreamily, "that came down to our little village beyond Sedan in harvest-time. He was a soldier in his own country. He was very big, and his hair was the same colour as the corn."

"Perhaps he's killed by now," I answered indifferently.

She turned on me with eyes aflame. "I should *know* if he were dead!" she cried passionately; "but he lives, and—"

Her voice rose to a shrill cry.

"Ah, see there!" she cried suddenly.

Out of the dusk opposite moved to a large camp-fire a big Prussian, whose hair shone yellow in the light from the flame.

"'Tis he! at last, at last!" burst from Little Comrade's parted lips, and the next moment she was flying like wind before me straight into the enemy's camp, and before I understood the meaning of her mad action the dusk had swallowed her up.

And the big Prussian was no longer by the fire.

I stood waiting; it might have been minutes or hours—which, I never knew, and then at last I saw a dark figure steal towards our lines.

I caught my breath. Did she not know that if seen they would shoot her for a spy—my Little Comrade!

I crept forward to meet her, and then there came a shout, a shot—a blinding line of fire. I strove to catch up to her, to warn her, to

throw myself in front of her, to do I know not what mad impossible thing, and save her, but even as I caught her hand there came flash upon flash, and Little Comrade sank down pierced by a dozen bullets.

I stood staring like a fool, feeling nothing save a dull curiosity as to what she guarded so carefully in her small clenched hand.

Sedan, and the victory that did not lie with us, have made history since that day. They tell me the skies of France are as blue, the flowers as sweet, as when Little Comrade and I toiled down those long hot roads. It may be so: only to me the whole earth seems grey because there is now no little figure to share the toil. I miss my Little Comrade—that is all. My eyes are turned inwards; it is the past I see, not the skies, and a face that is more flower-like than any flowers.

It is such a tiny grave, even for the tiny frame of Little Comrade, and sometimes my heart aches lest she should be cramped in her narrow bed.

I lay my lips to the sod and whisper things to her—things my foolish tongue never dare tell in life.

She knows all my secrets. I can see her quite plainly as she lies; her eyes are closed, for she is weary with her long day's march, but there is a smile on her lips; her hands are very thin and white, and in one of them, tightly clenched, she guards the light lock of the big Prussian.

I tell her that I must be growing old, that I am no longer "Crow," for my hair is silver, and I do not find the world as amusing as I used to do. I tell her that the ten years since they took her from me, and her Prussian lover, for the sake of a harvest-field flirtation by her old home, gave her hasty burial, seem ten times ten to me. I tell her that his love would have paled before mine, though his the vows of love, and mine only the silence of a full heart.

I can see that yellow curl twining round her fingers like a living thing, and I know that her love still lives.

I can see her red-stained hair, the price of her love.

I can even hear her murmur, as for one moment her eyes unclose, and she smiles into mine, "Bonsoir, Pierrot!" (Such a long good-night, dear heart!)

And when at dawn I creep away, I leave my youth in the grave of Little Comrade.

WINIFRED BOGGS.

## FAR EASTERN VIGNETTES

## VI. HARU'S SAMURAI

In Tokyo, where the outer moat takes a sharp turn under the bridge of Toro no mon—Tiger's gate—there is a *jinriksha* (more commonly *kuruma*) stand. The rain pours down steadily, splashing in the brown waters of the moat, and battering pitifully the heavy clusters of double cherry blossom on the trees which border it. Three or four of the *kuruma* men are crouching under the ineffectual shelter of a couple of mats which are slung from two tree stems. While they send up puffs of smoke from their tiny pipes they throw out their fingers in a swift gamble of guessing at the number displayed, and their small change circulates rapidly. There is a zest about this pastime, arising from the knowledge that it is unlawful and dependent on the blind eye of the neighbouring policeman, which causes it to be accompanied by bursts of rough laughter, in which no word of anger or dispute seems to mingle.

Others of the men sit under the raised hoods of their *kurumas*, wrapped in the thick red blankets which are the compulsory furnishing of the little vehicles, for the air is raw and chilly, and their clothing of the thinnest. Some of them are making a scanty meal from rolls of rice, or of coarser grain, which they carry in their lacquer boxes; some sleep.

One man does none of these things; he is absorbed in a dingy book and turns its pages eagerly, quite undisturbed by his surroundings.

None of the men have much expectation of a fare to-day. Their stand, in the wide space at the end of the street leading by the moat-side from the railway station, is a good one in fine weather, when the sight of a *kuruma* will often suggest its use to a tired pedestrian. But to-day, those who wish to drive must be tucked in securely at their own doors, for the rain is sufficient to soak them through in a few seconds of exposure, and the stand by Toro no mon is not quite close to any house.

Those who walk have mounted themselves, clear of the mud, on high wooden clogs, tucked their skirts securely into their waistbelts, and leaving their bare legs and feet to the mercy of the elements, they move along with the abandon of the *vacuous viator*, checked only by the occasional collision of two yellow oiled-paper umbrellas, held low to shelter the head and shoulders of the bearers.

Such an umbrella, with such legs and feet under it, appears suddenly round the gate angle by the bridge, and there is a small stir among the men : they recognise Goro, the coolie or yard-man of the girls' school beyond the gateway.

"Ho, Goro san ! a *kuruma* is it ?" cry several voices.

"It is so," answers Goro, "a *kuruma*, a good dry one. It is for one of our *O jo san*" (young ladies).

There is a murmur of consultation ; then from a post by the mats, the man who is nearest reaches down a bunch of cords, with which hangs a brass ring. Threading one of the cords through the ring, he takes as many of them as there are men grouped round him, and holding them tightly, presents the free ends to the *kurumayas*, who each grasp one. As they pull the cords apart, it soon appears that the ring, which represents the job in hand, has fallen to the lot of the student.

"So the *Samurai* it is," cry the others, with a laugh, half good-natured, half derisive, as they go back quickly to their shelters.

The man whom fortune has favoured girds himself, bestows his book in the box which forms the seat of his *kuruma*, and dons his rain-coat, a mantle of loose straw held lightly together, which gives him the appearance of a rick moving about on legs of shining wet amber, and topped by a gigantic white mushroom. A funny object enough, but one which excites no remark among his fellows, who will one and all appear in a similar garb when the occasion arises.

"Where to, Goro san ?" cries one of the men.

"As far as the Ginza," answers the coolie.

At this there is another laugh, for the Ginza, where the big shops are, is near, a course of five *sen* only, and they judge rightly that five *sen* will repay the man but poorly for the trouble and exposure.

When all is ready, Imai san, *samurai de jure, kurumaya de facto*, follows clumsy Goro through the windings of the gateway and up the hill, under the heavy foliage of the trees which surround the school buildings. All is quiet about the door as they reach it, for the pupils have gone home an hour ago, packed by twos and threes into the *kurumas* which have waited there since early morning. One girl only stands in the hall ; she it is for whom Goro has called the *kuruma*, O Haru san, the daughter of Kajima san, the rich *Honya*, or book-seller, who owns the shop in the Ginza, and two or three, equally important, elsewhere.

O Haru san has stayed behind the others to-day, for there has been a class for the study of flower arranging, and at its close the skilled teacher, who knows the meaning of each bend and twist in a spray of blossom, of each juxtaposition of flower and bud, has waited willingly to give her aid to Haru. The result is in the upright section of bamboo which the girl holds so carefully. From it rises a branch of purple flowers. Each blossom has its star-like circle of tiny florets,

radiating from a heart of gold. The branch is backed and kept in position by a firm, rigid bough of laurel. In her other hand the girl holds the *ferushiki*, or crape handkerchief in which her school-books are tied carefully.

It is a work of some little difficulty to guard her from the soaking rain, and her flowers from any jarring movement, as she dips beneath the low-tilted hood of the *kuruma*. Imai san, the *kurumaya*, and Goro lend skilful aid, and at last she is settled, with the red blanket tucked round her knees and the flowers held carefully in front. The *kurumaya's* face is hidden by his huge hat, as is his form by the rough thatch of his rain-coat. She gives no glance at him as he pulls up the dripping oil-cloth apron almost to meet the hood.

"*Sayonara, O jo san,*" says the coolie, bowing awkwardly under his yellow umbrella, and the *kuruma* with its load speeds swiftly down the hill and through the Tiger's gate to the moat-side.

They have gone more than half the way when the rain clouds lift suddenly, and a golden gleam from the western sky behind them lights up the turbid water.

"*Kurumaya san,*" calls the girl, and the man stands still. "Oh!" she cries again, "it would be well to let down the hood, if it be possible. The books are slipping, and as for the flowers it goes ill with them."

The *kurumaya* lowers the shafts, causing Haru to tilt forward at an angle which might be uncomfortable, but that she is so well used to it, and quickly pulls back the hood as she desires.

"Please hold the bamboo for a moment," she says next, "while I settle the books."

As he takes it she catches sight of his face.

"Imai san, is it?" she exclaims in great surprise.

"It is Imai," he answers, pride and shame struggling in his voice.

"Ah, Imai san, we have missed you! He often spoke of you, the little brother." She would fain ask why he is doing coolie's work in this mean dress; but the question must needs give pain to her and to him, and it remains unspoken. Instead she repeats with a wistful inflection in her voice, but with the smile which is deemed to atone for the incivility of any mention of a personal grief—"The little brother!"

"As for the boy, how goes it? Well?" asks the *kurumaya*.

She points to the flowers in his hand. He knows them—the blossom of remembrance and the laurel bough—the offering placed on graves.

"It was the fever," she says. "Now I have no brother, and for my father and my mother there is no son."

What can he say as he stands before her, a sorry sight, and all too conscious of the dripping coolie garb? She does not seem to notice it, but goes on: "How much you helped him last year with these

hard lessons, and me too. Imai san, mine were easy when you explained them. I am always grateful, and I thank you."

"Nay," he says, finding voice and courage at last, "it is for me to be grateful. But for the master's goodness in letting me study the books in the *honya*, I could never have entered the university."

"Then you did enter? But why—?"

Her eyes speak the farther question, though her lips are silent.

"*O jo san*," he says, "is there not one thing which comes first?" He smiles now. "My mother fell ill, there was no money; I had to work, and quickly. The strong men have gone to the war; many *kurumayas'* places were vacant."

"You do well," she says. "Yes, it is so, that one thing comes first." But her eyes are full of pity. "And as for your honourable mother," she goes on, "is it well with her?"

In his turn he points to the flowers. "She too sleeps in Aoiyama."

"And now?" she asks presently.

"Now, I am no longer a widow's only son. I shall go and report myself for the army to-morrow."

"To-morrow," she says, "we take the flowers to Fumé's grave."

She holds out her hand for the bamboo, and, as he gives it, one spray, half broken, falls limp against the laurel bough. Imai turns quickly, raises the shafts of the *kuruma*, and runs without pause to the front of the bookshop in the Ginza. There a servant stands ready to receive the *O jo san*, and to hand his modest fee to the *kurumaya*.

Again the flowers give trouble. "Take care," cries the girl, but a rough movement of the servant breaks off the pendant spray, and it lies in the wet road at the *kurumaya's* feet.

"Sayonara, *O jo san*," he says, in humble *kurumaya* tones.

"Sayonara, Imai san," she answers in tones as meek, and the sweet voice trembles a little. Then, for a moment, their eyes meet. Her look is proud, shy, tender; his is ardent, humble, confident.

As she turns away he stoops for the broken flower, wipes it clean from the mud of the street, and places it carefully in the little box which hangs from his girdle; then, with his *kuruma* behind him, he speeds away towards the sunset.

She, leaving her *geta* at the entrance, and slipping clean straw sandals on her feet, threads her way round the polished boards of the verandah till she comes to the chamber where her mother, with sad, patient face, bends over some boy's garments on the floor, folding and smoothing them with loving touches. She brightens as the girl comes in, bowing in a courteous and dutiful greeting, which no intimacy of affection between mother and daughter will allow her to neglect.

The mother notices the bamboo with the flowers. "For

Fumé," she says; and together they place it reverently in the *tokonoma*, where, below the hanging picture of crane and pine bough, stands the faded photograph of a heavy-faced boy in the tight, many-buttoned uniform of the "Nobles' School." What a poor, inappropriate, common thing it is! And yet, what pathos of regret and grief can it call forth! what faint, far echoes of things supernal! They stand there, these two, hand in hand, with bent heads inclined towards each other, in a union of thought and feeling more perfect than the girl wots of. For presently the mother speaks.

"Haru ko," she says, "you remember the young man, the *Shosei* (inmate) who used to help you and *him* last year?"

"I remember him, mother," says Haru softly.

"Listen, little daughter," the mother goes on. "Only say nothing—it is a secret. To-morrow will come O Sada, the match-maker. But hush! I should not speak of it. Imai, the *Samurai*, was he pleasing to you? Tell me?"

"He was pleasing, good and kind always," she answers.

"Then, if the father wishes to choose him as *yoshi*, it will be well."

A *yoshi* is a husband who forgets his own people and his father's house to belong, as son, to the family of his bride. The girl's head is turned away now, but her neck and throat redden with the blush which lingers yet, a survival, among shy Far Eastern maidens.

"It will be well," she whispers. A great pang meets the happiness in her heart as she remembers the *Samurai*'s words: "I will report myself for the army to-morrow."

On the morrow more things than one happen. The flowers on the dead boy's grave mark that it is a month since they laid him there. The bookseller sends for old Sada, the match-maker, and directs her to seek out Imai san, and lay before him the bright future which awaits him as adopted son of the house of Kajima, heir to its name and wealth, and, as a necessary condition, husband to O Haru san, its only child. And the *Samurai*, unknowing, makes ready to face danger, as his race have ever done: an eager, proud, fighting man, with his sword by his side, and the purple flower of remembrance over a heart which is full of the vision of a little school-girl's tender smile.

The months pass, the soldiers return, with much waving of flags and decking of triumphal arches. Gentle Peace smiles on the land. A little sourly, perhaps, for she is forcibly bereft of some portion of her honour; still she smiles. Only to little Haru the peace brings no solace. The soldiers return, but not all.

"As for the *Samurai*," asks Kajima san, "will he come back?"

"As for the *Samurai*, master, he will not come back," answers Sada san the match-maker. "As for the *Samurai*, it goes not; but here is such another *Yoshi*, better far than the *Samurai*."

And so by-and-by it is settled. There are many men ready to fill the post of *Yoshi* to O Kajima, the *Honya*, and to marry his daughter. And, as she and the *Samurai* agreed on that remembered day, there is one thing which comes first.

So they choose whom they will. But she hardly cares. For on those far-off arid slopes, among the nameless graves, there is surely one where the flower of remembrance lies on a faithful heart. And O Haru san does not forget.

I. RANKEN.

### THE SAILOR TO THE SEA

**F**OND Ocean Mother, whose wide arms embrace  
Fair tropic isles and far-off wond'rous lands,  
Extending east and west thy generous hands,  
Uniting heart to heart and race to race;  
Deal kindly with thy son, who loves thy smile  
But not thy frown; send pleasant halcyon seas,  
The billows whitened by the passing breeze,  
That fills the sail and lulls the sense awhile.

And if, in moments of thy sterner mood,  
Wave fall on wave, fierce driven, but to rise  
In wilder tumult t'ward the sullen skies,  
Restrain thine anger to the common good;  
That stress, which else had wrought destruction dire,  
Engulfing bark and sailor in the deep,  
Serve but to speed him on with wider sweep  
In safety to the port of his desire.

C. LEWIS ROTHERHAM.

